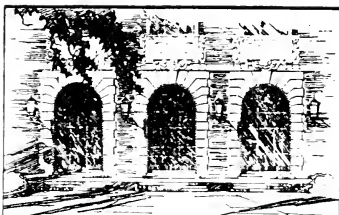


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THE THREE PATHS.

LONDON:
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

THE THREE PATHS;

OR,

TRUTH,

VANITY, AND PROFESSION.

BY

THE HON. MRS. ANDERSON.

“ The soul’s weak dwelling, batter’d and decay’d,
Lets in new lights through chinks by sickness made.”

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL’S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE.

1852.

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Dedicated

TO

JAN 12 1853
MARSHALL

LADY CHARLOTTE MATILDA GREVILLE,

A FRIEND

EVER READY TO WEEP WITH THOSE THAT WEEP,

AND TO REJOICE WITH THOSE THAT REJOICE,

BY

HER SINCERELY AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

CAROLINE D. ANDERSON.

Gen. P. 11. 25 Aug 53 Story

PREFACE.

ALL who take up this Work merely with a view to amusement will pronounce it dull; those who expect wit or learning will be disappointed: but those who seek for the “truth as it is in Jesus,” will not, the Author hopes, lay it down without acknowledging its power. They must regard it as imperfection addressing imperfection. The principles inculcated are not of man’s invention, but the stream that flows from a higher source—“the Word of God.”

It has been written under much bodily and mental suffering, with constant interruptions, which have often occasioned long intervals between the different parts. Many who write will recognise their own expressions; for whenever the Author has met with sentiments likely

to impress truths in a better manner than she could represent them, she has not hesitated to adopt them. The desire to exemplify the loveliness of true religion, in opposition to the principles of the world, or to those of opinion or prejudice, is the Author's only object: the characters are intended as mere representatives of different motives of action. Although no individual in the story is drawn from life, there are few who have mixed in general society who will fail to recognise the faults and mistakes of each. The Author hopes that many may find an Ellen Somerset among their friends or relatives: to her it is no imaginary character.

If these unpretending volumes should be the means of leading one heart to higher aspirations than the selfishness which is the prevailing fault of the age, the Author will be perfectly satisfied.

THE THREE PATHS.

CHAPTER I.

THE evening sun had wrapped itself in clouds of deep violet tinged with gold, divided here and there by the exquisitely delicate and scarcely defined blue of the pure sky, when Ellen Somerset, slowly returning from a ramble in the park, of which the wide-spreading beauty was all her own, retired to her boudoir, her countenance saddened, and the tears gently forcing themselves through her long dark eyelashes. She had passed the time of life when beauty is the first attraction, and had attained the still doubtful and unascertained period, called middle age. What period that may be, will ever remain a mystery, for few acknowledge it till it is forced upon them, and we see *childish*, not *childlike* simplicity and girlish affectation at fifty, while the sober mind and manner sits as unpleasantly on fifteen. To

appear simply what we are is far more graceful and pleasing. Whatever is borrowed is not our own, and seems never to have its natural place while with us. When returned, from having been identified with its temporary possessor, it leaves an awkward vacancy. Ellen Somerset was six-and-thirty at the time which we thus venture, with great deference to the feelings of all who are approaching the same, to denominate middle age, and she had been a widow five years. From her appearance she might have passed for twenty-six, for her light and elastic figure, graceful motions, and still fresh complexion, gave her a youthful contour ; but there was no levity in her manner, and in her dress she had all the dignity of the mother of her children. She had no wish to pass for an elder sister, but preferred the repose and respect due to the guide and protectress of their early years. Like most women who have been deprived by death of the support and happiness which a really happy union must bestow, she had at first drooped and faded, but the natural strength of her character had stimulated her to exertion ; and though the still lovely Ellen Somerset, with her large jointure, had not been without many opportunities of returning to the world as a gay bride, she had declined all such temptations, and cheerfully devoted herself to the education of her children. She knew that

though she might again be a wife, she would not find the husband she had lost ; and that, while called upon to practise all the duties of wedded life, she should find the absence of the companionship which made happiness of that which, without it, would become a weariness. She had immediately returned to Staunton Park, where, with few intervals, she had remained ever since her husband's death. To this estate Ernest Somerset had retired shortly before. It had been his intention to pass the remainder of his life in the exercise of the Christian duties entailed upon him by so large an inheritance. Hitherto his time had been engaged in a career of political excitement. From his father, Lord George Somerset, he had inherited a good name and a small fortune, to both of which he had added considerably by conduct and talents, establishing the first and increasing the latter. He had been fortunate in his choice of a wife, and in Ellen Stapleton, whose father, Lord Hawksbury, had been his first political friend, he had found a companion to brighten and cheer his domestic hours, while she shared with pleasure in the brilliant success of his public career. The great exertions he had made, and the constant fatigue of long debates, which night after night had interfered with rest, acting upon a weak constitution, had greatly impaired his health, and at the close

of the session he had returned to Staunton, equally exhausted in mind and body. Ellen watched him with the anxious eyes of real affection ; and as she daily witnessed his failing strength, many were the bitter tears she shed in secret. It was in vain that she urged the necessity of more repose and care ; for, with the excitement peculiar to pulmonary disease, he would daily take long rides to the various parts of his estate, unwilling to leave the care of souls, as well as that of the rents, to his agent.

It was after a day of unusual fatigue that he returned more exhausted than he had felt for some time, and before Ellen could join him, he had fainted on the stairs ; which, as she unconsciously ascended, she found streaming with blood. Far from fainting or screaming, as weak women always do, she flew to his side, and carefully raising his head, she endeavoured to stanch the crimson stream which was still flowing from his mouth, while she called loudly for assistance. Fortunately one of the servants was at the moment in his master's dressing-room, and hearing something fall heavily, had immediately descended, and found him perfectly unconscious, though the blood no longer issued from his mouth. He was tenderly conveyed to the sofa, but all efforts to restore life were in vain. He recovered his consciousness for a few

hours, but was too feeble to speak. He could only press his Ellen's hand, and commend her and his children to God, when a second fainting fit came on, and he never spoke again. It would be vain to dwell upon the hours or days and months of deep sorrow that followed—

“ It is not the tear at the moment shed,
When the cold turf has just been laid o'er him,
That can tell how beloved was the soul that is fled,
Or how deep in our hearts we deplore him.
'Tis the tear through many a long day wept,
Through a life by his loss all shaded ;
'Tis the sad remembrance fondly kept
When all lighter griefs have faded.

“ Oh ! thus shall we mourn, and his memory's light,
While it shines through our hearts, shall improve them ;
For worth shall look fairer, and truth more bright,
When we think how he lived but to love them.
And as buried saints the grave perfume,
Where fadeless they've long been lying,
So our hearts shall borrow a sweetening bloom
From the image he left there in dying.”

Friends crowded around the sufferer, but though her heart was grateful, it could not beat in response to the affection they manifested. While she received it with gratitude and kindness, she found no comfort but in communing in silence with her God. The spring of life was gone, and for some time even the performance of her duties was a most painful effort. She was gifted with no common mind. She had nothing to expect from time. In her case

it would only make reality more real. It could not bring the dead to life, it could not make her younger, it could not make her a rejoicing wife ; but it could make her faithful to the trust committed to her care, and to that trust she determined in faith and prayer to devote her life. Some people accused her of want of feeling, because she bore her sorrow without any great demonstration of grief, and, like most strong-minded people, she was regarded as no longer in need of sympathy. They left her (as they called it contemptuously) upon her pedestal. What others denominated want of feeling, was, in fact, an absence of selfishness. She felt for others, while self is the prevailing passion of most. She knew that her sorrow was not theirs, and that after a time a veil must be drawn over the heart ; but Ellen Somerset's grief was an inward bleeding, which, while the smile was on her lips, drew the life from her heart, and left her dry and sapless. It is a mistake to suppose that those who make the greatest demands upon public sympathy feel the most. The nerves are weak, and instead of arousing and strengthening the mind, by opening it to passing rays of light, they shut themselves up in morbid sensibility, destroying the happiness and comfort of all around them, and rendering themselves useless and burdensome to their families. The strong mind,

on the contrary, views all aright in God's sight, and while the suffering to themselves is more acute, though less deadening, they still take their part in the daily routine of life, gently bending to meet the storm, and thus, by non-resistance, they find a calmer passage through the rough road of life. What is God's will is theirs, and by cheerfully acquiescing and thankfully receiving all the kindly influences He sheds around them, the mind is gradually restored to a wholesome state, though it may never regain its joyful elasticity. "It is as in cares and kindness, small ones float up to the tongue, and great ones sink down into the heart in silence."

"For he who has but tears to give,
Must weep those tears alone."

Conscious that, after any great affliction, the mind is for a time under a cloud, Ellen Somerset made no plans for the future, no rash resolves. She gave the time which custom and propriety allow on such occasions, to retirement and consideration, admitting none but relatives or friends. Instead of flying after excitement either of a religious or a worldly nature, to make up for the loss of interest at home, she contemplated the deprivation as one sent by God for her good, and calmly received the cup, cheerfully willing to drink it to the dregs. She

knew and felt all its bitterness, but it was not consistent with her well-regulated and well-informed mind to push it aside. As in the case of the paschal lamb, which was to be eaten unbroken, she dealt with her trial. She received it whole, neither salving it over with false hopes, endeavouring to lessen it by quack remedies, nor running from it. By constant meditation and prayer, by the instruction derived from really sound writers, she kept her mind in a calm and peaceful state. Over this world the shadow was deep; but there was light in the distance, and on that gleam her eye was steadily fixed. Conscious that while all earthly affections, pleasures, or interests are subject to death or extinction, she knew that the light which comes from above burns steadily, imparting a clear gleam to others, whilst its own is never lessened. To her friends she was kind and gentle, not visiting upon them the sorrows of her heart, which they would gladly have alleviated, but could not prevent. She endeavoured to interest herself in others, and in their happiness to feel the reflection on her own heart. Hers was not a selfish sorrow; self had no part in her. Her grief was too deeply seated for lesser trials to affect it, but not such as to deaden her perceptions of right and wrong, or to do injustice to others, because God had seen fit to afflict herself. Ellen Somerset was of a

truly Christian character. Hers was not a profession which, while it made the world hate her, was too little to secure the love of God. She carried her sense of duty into the merest trifles. In her appearance there was no neglect. She dressed not to be admired, but as a part of the position in life to which she belonged. To be untidy or ill-dressed would have excited a consciousness of error, to be the contrary was second nature: it cost her neither time nor trouble. Her income was too large to compel her to that strict attention to economy which the necessity of a suitable appearance occasions when means are small, and her taste too refined to wish observation. All was in accordance with her station. Her desire was to take her responsibilities upon herself, not to lessen them by adding to those of others. In her household the same regulation of mind appeared. There were no flaunting, vulgar servants to be seen, no impertinent footmen to measure attention to her guests according to their dress or equipage, no undue watchfulness, which chafes the mind without lessening evil. Visitors were never entertained with histories of practical deceptions among the maids—the quantity of food consumed—or their evening strolls and flirtations. Hers was a “rule of the head and not of the heels,” while no opportunity of sowing seed on the way was neglected. Her

desire was to implant an acting principle, which required no external propelling beyond natural means. She had books, inculcating rules for daily living, which she lent, not such as are written only for persons supposed to be of inferior capacity, nor such as raised ideas beyond station ; but books which, by elevating the mind above the trifling incidents which destroy the happiness of little minds, enforce the necessity of having “a mind to the condition, if the condition is not to the mind.” Her first wish was to make all around her happy in the true sense of the word : happy in a cheerful submission to the will of God at all times, in a simple resignation and confidence in the hour of trial, and in the conviction that by a steady pursuance of the path of duty, in reliance on Divine assistance, a blessing is sure to rest on the endeavour. “He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.” Although most attentive to the externals of our Reformed Church, no ascetic discipline was enforced. Daily duties must be performed, and the hours of meditation and prayer she regarded as the preparation for their being well done. Family prayers morning and evening, a strict attention to the Sundays and festivals, and a regular reception of the Holy Communion were neglected by none. Her own conduct was a speaking lesson ; and none who witnessed her

unaffected humility, accompanied by love and charity to all around her, could for a moment doubt the pureness of the source from which the stream flowed. Her true humility, like the tree loaded with fruit, showed itself in lowliness. It is only the light and unfruitful branches which are easily raised by the wind. She never despised lower attainments, or allowed herself to form uncharitable judgments. Her object was to win by love, and to deal justly by all. There was such a reality in her character that even "the vulgar recognized her as a superior being by some mysterious sign. They admired without comprehending, as the blind enjoy the sunshine who have never seen the sun." Her eldest child, Geraldine, was, at the time of Mr. Somerset's death, ten years old, a lovely and promising girl, with a refinement of feature, delicacy of complexion, and beauty of expression, which made her an object not only of admiration, but love. She was fair and rather pale, with rich brown hair hanging in clustering ringlets over her intellectual forehead. She promised to be tall, but was so beautifully and delicately formed, that she seemed shorter than she was. From constant association with superior minds, her own was far in advance of those of other girls of her age, but she had lost none of the charm of childhood, and could take pleasure in the simplest

and most innocent amusements. Indeed, all her young friends welcomed her with pleasure, as her quickness, intelligence, and invention, were of the greatest assistance in their games. Her mother had always encouraged her in the innocent amusements of her age, fully persuaded that it conduced to a healthy tone of mind. “Man could no sooner see than he saw himself happy: his eyes’ sight and reason were both perfect at once, and the objects of both were able to make him as happy as he would. When he first opened his eyes he saw heaven above him, earth under him, the creation about him, God before him; he knew what all these things meant, as if he had been long acquainted with them all. He saw the heavens glorious but far off, his Maker thought it requisite to fit him with a paradise nearer home. If God had appointed him immediately to heaven, his body had been superfluous; it was fit his body should be answered with an earthen image of that heaven which was for his soul. Had man been made only for contemplation, it would have served as well to be placed in some vast desert on the top of some barren mountain; but the same power which gave him a heart to meditate, gave him hands to work, and work fit for his hands. Neither was it the purpose of the Creator that man should but live. Pleasure may stand with innocence. He

that rejoiced to see all He had made to be good, rejoiceth to see all He hath made to be well. God loves to see His creatures happy ; our lawful delight is His ; they know not God, that think to please Him with making themselves miserable¹."

Hitherto, Ellen Somerset had been her own governess, as no other duties or relations interfered with this most interesting occupation ; and she much preferred superintending herself the mental direction of her children in early life, while she secured the attendance of a respectable and superior servant for their exercise and play hours. Ernest was a noble boy, and it was a great amusement and interest to Geraldine to share in his instruction, while it was a good lesson for herself. Few things call out the faculties more than teaching clever and intelligent children. Their questions enforce attention and research, while the patience and kindness called into practice soften and improve the character of the teacher. Little occurred under present circumstances to disturb the daily routine. Friends had naturally returned to their own duties and occupations, and Mrs. Somerset never for a moment supposed herself neglected by their doing so. She felt, it is true, alone in the world, but this was no reason for obliging others to devote themselves to her. She faced

¹ Hall's Contemplations.

the painful truth, and at once determined to make herself independent as much as possible of externals, grateful for society when it was given, and content to be alone when the comfort of others was affected by her enjoyment. In the village and schools she had a deep interest, and a most judicious and pious clergyman was ever ready to assist her benevolent actions and views for the improvement of all around her. Well aware how often things are undone by the way in which they are done, she was careful never to hurt the feelings of any. Hers was sympathy, not condescending kindness. She carried a "vial of delicacy," of which she poured out the contents when about to confer a favour. The simple accident of being greater or richer never inclined her to patronise or tyrannize. Her object was to do good, not to distress by impertinent, intrusive, or irrelevant questions, not to make the poor discontented with their own, or envious of her position; but to lessen the evils of poverty to them and of sorrow to herself, by giving pleasure to others. While "sorrow is a contraction, joy is a diffusion of the heart;" and "the prayer of hungry souls and poor," was a balm to her wounded spirit. Many of her friends wondered that she did not lessen her establishment after Mr. Somerset's death. Lady Sophia Cumberland in particular, thought her very wrong to retain it, as she might give away so much more.

This was no part of Mrs. Somerset's religion. She would on no account "have wronged in the least that noble estate which was to descend to others after her, and was therefore at vast expense in keeping it up. Though none were more ready to recede from their own right, when personal interest alone was concerned, she would be justly tenacious in what concerned her successors ; always saying, that whatever she lost herself, she would never give occasion to those who came after her to complain." She remembered that the poor live by the rich, that with her station and fortune she inherited its duties, and that, in a careful superintendence of her household, she fulfilled her part far more consistently than in depriving them and their families of the means of support, that she might exercise almsgiving, where lawful gains would have both added to the respectability and happiness of the objects of her compassion. "Where others gave to their dependents, she placed hers, by employment, above the necessity of her bounty." She was more disposed to increase than to lessen her establishment ; and while Lady Sophia Cumberland's name appeared in all the lists of subscriptions to charitable institutions, Mrs. Somerset's desire was, by providing employment for honest and hard-working people, to diminish the number of those requiring such refuges.

It is not to be supposed that she in any degree despised such noble witnesses of benevolence and liberality. Far from this being the case, there were few to which she did not either secretly or publicly contribute. Wherever her name or influence could benefit, she freely lent them ; but if this could be avoided, the injunction of our Saviour, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth," was the rule in her charities. In all her other actions the same spirit prevailed. Her delight was to prove her love to God, by showing love to His creatures. She desired the praise of God. The praise of man could never influence her, though she received it in the same spirit of humility and love, which so strongly marked her whole deportment. She never thought it beneath her to converse with the humblest of her servants, and with the younger ones made it a rule to meet them once or twice a week for catechetical and Scriptural instruction. The effect of such an influence was visible on all around her ; and none who came to Staunton Park left it without feeling, that whatever difference of opinion might exist, the system worked well, and that Mrs. Somerset, her establishment, her village, and its schools, were a model for a Christian rule—

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

CHAPTER II.

ABOUT ten miles from Staunton arose the noble Abbey of St. Omer, which had for ages been in the family of Lord Rockingham, and although still retaining much of its ancient and venerable appearance, the building had gradually approached to modern taste, and during the present Lord Rockingham's time had been materially altered. He was a nobleman of the old school, and not all the changes or expediency of the present day could alter his habits, or the real integrity of his character. He had been born and lived upon his estate, though at certain seasons of the year the family coach wended its way to London in old-fashioned state, and he was still as rooted as ever in the good old way. It had been his misfortune in early life to marry a distant relation of a poor and comparatively unknown and insignificant family, to whose members the idea of being cousins to the great Lord Rockingham was a constant source of delight

and imaginary consequence. Instead of living as she might have done, respected and respectable, Mrs. Carrington was incessantly talking of "my cousins Lord and Lady Rockingham," and "when I was last at the Abbey," a circumstance which had happened when she was about seventeen. She had soon after married Mr. Carrington, a country squire of small fortune, in Devonshire; and Mrs. Carrington, whose ideas retained the recollection of the manners and habits of certain lords and ladies at "the Abbey," spared no pains in endeavouring to make the lovely Matilda, her daughter, fashionable. It is true that she had a most apt scholar; Matilda promised in all respects to satisfy her mother's expectation. Mrs. Carrington having formed her notions of education at a distance from the world, and never having herself been initiated into the mysteries of fashion, had very vulgar and mistaken ideas upon the subject. A total absence of refinement was evident in all she said and did. Her furniture was massive, not elegant; her dress smart, not graceful; and instead of the delicacy and regard to the feelings of others, which alone give good manners, she thought only of displaying herself and her possessions to the best advantage. There was none of the quiet grace, the perfect ease, the *abandon* of real good-breeding. All was effort; her presence

as a lady was proclaimed, not felt. If she gave a dinner, the splendour of her plate, the superiority of her cooking, and the names of her guests were her only object. Intellect, talent, or goodness, were equally disregarded; and it naturally followed, that Mr. and Mrs. Carrington, whose own position gave them influence and respectability, by pushing where they might have walked quietly, had never fitted in properly. Rough edges destroyed all proportion and symmetry, and but from an unwillingness to give offence, the neighbours would gladly have declined their invitations. "All who in their air, treatment of others, or habitual arrogance, give themselves credit for more wit, wisdom, and goodness, than they really possess, if called upon to produce it, will find the world break in upon them, and consider them as having cheated them of all the esteem they had before allowed them. This brings a commission of bankruptcy upon them; and those who might have gone on to their life's end in a prosperous way, by aiming at more than they ought, are no longer proprietors of what they really had before, but their pretensions fare as all other things do which are torn instead of divided¹."

Matilda Carrington was a very handsome girl,

¹ Steele.

and it was her firm determination to make what the world calls a good marriage, which implies good fortune and a coronet ; character, mind, appearance, or feeling being quite secondary considerations, if ever remembered at all. Those who venture to consider them, are regarded as poor sentimentalists, who have partially lost their senses. A poor curate was her horror, a rector only a degree better ; and, in short, she had set her mind upon finding in some way a road to London and all its gaieties. How to accomplish this purpose was not a little difficult, for although Mr. Carrington's fortune enabled him to maintain a most respectable position in the country, the expense of a London season was out of the question ; and Mrs. Carrington had worldly wisdom enough to know that unless her daughter could make some sort of appearance, she had much better stay at home. Circumstances, however, favoured her wishes, for Mr. Turner, the rector of their village, received pupils, and it was with great delight that, on entering the church on Sunday, Matilda saw a handsome-looking youth, apparently much older than the young gentlemen who had hitherto occupied the rector's pew. It was a wet Sunday, so that much to her vexation she was dressed in her old bonnet and cloak. She was careful not to be seen, but in the mean time, her eyes were not idle,

and she was well satisfied that no common youth stood before her. On her return home, her first inquiry was for her maid, whom she closely questioned, and to her surprise and no small satisfaction heard that it was her own cousin, Lord Rockingham, whom she had seen. She immediately communicated the interesting fact to her mother, who was as pleased as herself, and nothing else was talked of till the time of afternoon service. To the great delight of both mother and daughter the rain ceased, and a bright sun succeeded the clouds which had obscured the morning. Matilda selected her prettiest bonnet and most fashionable mantilla, and having carefully smoothed the bands of her hair, set out on her walk to church. Of the real object of that solemn assembly she thought little. She had been trained wholly for this world, and thoughtless as she was, was more worthy of compassion than blame. Had she been instructed in the truth, she would not have been the vain, frivolous creature she was: from her earliest years, she had been taught to consider it a duty to gain a good establishment, and that if this desirable end were not attained, she would sink into comparative neglect and poverty, as her father's property was chiefly entailed on a distant relation. When Matilda reached the church, she saw Mrs. Turner with Lord Rock-

ingham in the churchyard, and to the no small surprise of that lady, whom she had seldom condescended to notice, although her superior in all but fortune, she smiled most graciously; Mrs. Carrington followed her daughter, and requested an introduction to her cousin. Lord Rockingham looked astonished, as he had never heard of Mrs. Carrington's existence, but on her explaining the relationship, he was too courteous to show his surprise, and at once accepted her proffered hand. He had been sent to Mr. Turner's to read during the vacation, and partly to separate him from a lovely but penniless girl, to whom he was disposed to show attentions very displeasing to his lady mother. Her son, who had no love for study, found the rectory very dull, and had little sympathy with the boys who were Mr. Turner's pupils. It was with much pleasure, therefore, that he accepted Mrs. Carrington's invitations, and was welcomed by the pleasant smiles of her daughter. With no amusement or society, and no watchful eye upon him, it was easy for this artful mother and daughter to entice a boy (for Lord Rockingham was not of age), and one whose natural integrity of character made him unsuspecting of others. It has been truly said by Dr. Johnson, that "if any two young people are so separated from society as to make them derive their whole pleasure from each other,

they will inevitably fall in love, as it is called, with each other; but at six months' end, if thrown into public life, when they might change partners at pleasure, each would soon forget that fondness which mutual dependence and the paucity of general amusement alone has caused, and each would separately feel delighted by the release."

How many unhappy and ill-assorted marriages have been consequent upon such circumstances, and how cautious those to whom young people are committed should be not to trifle thus with the most important event of their lives! How many hearts have been broken, and years of misery occasioned by the carelessness and heartlessness of guardians or parents in these matters! Young people are allowed to be together with no regard to its danger, and often with the cruel conviction that it is of no consequence how the son or brother amuses himself, as the connexion can be easily broken off by the father, when it comes to settlements. In this case Lord Rockingham was not to blame, for though when his mother heard that he had proposed and been accepted by Matilda Carrington, her indignation was uncontrollable, it was in vain to remonstrate. He had bound himself in honour, and nothing that she could urge had the slightest effect. She also withdrew him

from Mr. Turner's, much to Matilda's vexation and to Mrs. Carrington's terror. Judging of Lord Rockingham by herself, she doubted his remaining constant; but she was wrong; and though it cannot be denied that occasionally doubts and misgivings arose in his mind as to the wisdom of his choice, Matilda played her part so well, that her real character was never displayed till it was too late to remedy his fatal mistake. Nothing could induce Lady Rockingham to show the slightest attention to her cousins, and it might have been supposed by her conduct that her son had been about to make a degrading connexion. The idea of the daughter of a relation whom she had always treated with neglect and contempt taking precedence of herself was dreadful, and she immediately left the Abbey and took refuge in her dowry-house in a distant part of the county. Even this proved too near, as she was constantly provoked by the mention of her odious daughter-in-law's name, and on one occasion actually met her at a county ball. She was also greatly vexed and surprised to find that far from taking part with her, the larger number of the company paid the most assiduous attentions to the rising sun, and that, with the exception of a few antiquated dowagers like herself, who had nothing to gain by deserting the ancient standard, she

was left alone with her anger. She had never for a moment in the days of her splendour suspected that all the attention and affected admiration she received was given to the mistress of the Abbey, and not to herself. Her cold and haughty manners had distanced affection, her condescending kindness had mortified more than obliged, and she had yet to learn that in the world men and manners are not judged by merit, but by weight and measure. Calculation takes the place of esteem, and interest of affection. The Dowager Lady Rockingham had no longer any thing to give. Her jointure, though considerable, was not enough for splendid entertainments; and her four stiff and uninteresting daughters, who had withered on the stem, because dukes and marquises had not sufficiently abounded, were too dull and insignificant to attract in their waning years what had been withheld before age had increased the rigidity of their forms and manners. It was a melancholy family. The world had receded while they would gladly have still basked in its sunshine. Lord Rockingham's marriage had completely overshadowed the last lingering ray upon their departed greatness. Nothing remained to them but a hollow sound, which they had not wisdom enough to turn into a harmony which would have whispered peace to their blighted hearts. The un-

kind manner in which their brother's wife had been received into the family, had made a breach which would never be healed in so worldly a mind as hers. Had the young Lady Rockingham been trained in Christian principles, she would have felt how much more noble it would be to return good for evil ; and even viewing it in a less exalted light, she would have consulted her own dignity more by endeavouring to draw her husband's family within the pale of kindness and consideration. Affection is not in our power, but the expression of anger or rudeness may be restrained, and nothing lessens respectability more than family dissension. Every member suffers ; and those who most encourage bitterness and discussion, are the first, when self-interest is concerned, to turn against the very persons to whom they have apparently listened with complacency, and with whom they have seemed to agree. In this Lady Rockingham made a great mistake, for the contempt and ridicule she endeavoured to cast on her mother and sisters-in-law, recoiled on herself. Many who had disliked them in their day of prosperity felt for them now. Had they in that day been amiable and considerate, no sensible, well-regulated mind would have quarrelled with them for keeping up the attributes of station. On the contrary, they could only have gained

greater respect, but this had been accompanied with so much haughty selfishness, that they had no friends. Outward respect and attentions can be bought and paid for, but affection and esteem are pearls of too great price to be found in shallow water, and only to be attained by real merit. The Dowager Lady Rockingham did not survive her son's marriage many years, and was for the first time since it had taken place received at the Abbey in the style she would have wished, when followed by the pomp and trappings of affected woe she was consigned to the family vault, to be forgotten, as though she had never lived. Greatness gave her a monument. Goodness could alone have given her an epitaph.

After her death the four Ladies Mertoun sank into the insignificance consequent upon fallen fortunes and advanced life, where none of the higher qualities have adorned the character. "Then indeed we may be deserted by little fashionable admirers and followers, but will ever be had in reverence by souls like our own." "The branches of the oak endure all the seasons of the year, though its leaves fall off in autumn, and these too will be restored with the returning spring." So it is with all who have not lived to themselves. Neither sickness, age, nor sorrow can estrange real affection; and friendship founded upon principle and regard,

like the shadow of the evening, strengthens with the decay of life, or the loss of other external circumstances which may, more or less, have conduced to its growth. It is not so much what we lose that makes our unhappiness, as the value we attach to what is past, and the way we make use of the present. If all were content to take the enjoyments each position afforded, they would find that each season has its charms. Spring may be more attractive, but summer is more settled and enjoyable. "Though autumn, like a faint old man, sits down by the way-side aweary," winter, with its snug home-comforts, has its many charms. So it is with life. Every thing here is as we estimate it, and the changes in our hearts make the changes that we feel. We must expect to be forgotten by the world in general, and are indeed no longer ourselves useful, ornamental, or perhaps agreeable, excepting to those who are endeared to us by association or kindred. "For time is like a fashionable host, that lightly shakes the parting guest by the hand, and with his arms outstretched as he would fly, greets the new comer." Had the Lady Mertouns ceased to care for fashion, and established themselves in some quiet corner where they could live to do good, they would soon have found a new kind of happiness. As it was, they remained like stunted trees in a new plan-

tation, every body wondering what they did there, and why they remained. With none belonging to them to chaperon, they had no call into general society ; and if such claims had existed, although the youngest of them was five-and-thirty at the time of Lady Rockingham's death, not one fancied herself old enough for the office.

It is surprising that so many years and so much painful reminiscence should be necessary to teach us our age. How far more sensible calmly to contemplate the figures that make it, guide ourselves by them in dress and manner, and go off the stage with a composed and steady gait, instead of tripping off with girlish airs, or being unceremoniously hissed or pushed off like worn-out actresses. It is wiser to face a difficulty than to run away from it, and those who grow old gracefully will find their reward even in this world. Lady Rockingham had attained the summit of her ambition ; but was she happy ? The answer is soon given—she was not. It was her own fault that it should be so, for her husband was kindness itself. He had deeply regretted the estrangement between his wife and mother, and had in every possible way endeavoured to lessen it ; but when two proud spirits meet, it is like two adamantine rocks hurled upon each other ; no impression is made on either. To the Dowager Lady Rockingham she was cold and cynical, to her sisters con-

temptuous, caring for nothing but her own consequence, and for those who were mean enough to make her feel their sense of it by obsequiousness and flattery. Totally incapable of appreciating her husband's noble and generous mind, and feeling that she appeared to disadvantage among his friends, she would have gladly separated him from them. In this endeavour she was unsuccessful; and if she had possessed a grain of common sense, or any regard for her own real interest, by sharing in the superior society in which he moved, she would have become a part of him, and thus raised the tone of her own mind and feelings. She never felt at ease in her position. With her equals she was uncomfortable, with her inferiors patronising and condescending. She expected to be of as much importance in London as she had been in the village where her father's superiority of fortune had given her precedency; and on finding herself disappointed now that she was reset among jewels of equal value, she preferred remaining at the Abbey, where, as lady of the house, her opinions were not opposed, and she could be the first. The consequence was, that Lord Rockingham went to London for his parliamentary duties without her, at first with regret, but by degrees he became so accustomed to being alone, that he ceased to think about it. Like all selfish people, when she found herself

left to do as she liked, she felt aggrieved. Reproaches followed, and by degrees she completely extinguished an affection which had never possessed any real foundation beyond circumstances and imagination. His kindness never varied, but he had too much sense to allow his respectability to be injured by the folly of a weak woman. "It is only in the sickness or decay of love that ceremony is demanded or used;" and while Lord Rockingham redoubled in attention, his heart had long ceased to respond. He would gladly have taken her with him, but, like a spoiled child, if invited she refused, if not she was angry. Like all weak women, she trifled with affection till it was gone, and then cried after it. Instead of making herself agreeable to the friends he invited to return with him, she appeared angry at his filling his house after his long absence, was silent and distant, casting a gloom upon the circle, and making a cold sepulchral grandeur of what might have been a most bright and cheerful society. As might be expected, Lord Rockingham dreaded a tête-à-tête, so that the house was always full of company, much to Lady Rockingham's real satisfaction, as in her heart she delighted in showing her magnificent dresses, and exhibiting herself as the mistress of the Abbey, though she never allowed it to be visible, and affected lassitude and disgust.

She had now been married fifteen years, and was the mother of a son and two daughters. Lord Cornbury was the eldest, and his two sisters were twelve and eight. Lady Catherine was a fine handsome girl, and promised to be an improved edition of her mother. Lady Matilda was more delicate and interesting in her appearance, and much more like her father in disposition and mind. Lord Cornbury as yet promised well. He had been at Eton, and was then going to a private tutor's, preparatory to college. Although extremely proud of him, his mother, most happily for him, did not think it necessary to interfere in his studies. Her daughters were all her care, and in them she hoped to have her vanity fully gratified. Catherine was her favourite, as by far the most apt scholar in worldly wisdom. Of the wisdom of the world to come she knew nothing. Her treasure was not in heaven, and she left such folly to old women and sick people. She had wanted the impress of fashion herself, and this she was determined to give to her daughters. She had no respect for the old-fashioned aristocracy of the Abbey. She had learned that in the small coterie called the fashionable world no respectability or birth is any thing without fashion ; so that as soon as her daughters were old enough, she announced her intention of going to London, engaged an elegant and

accomplished French governess, with no regard to her being a Romanist or to her character, the best masters, and the most *recherchée* modiste. All this was well. Mrs. Somerset also went to London, and to all appearance there was no difference, but the motives of action were widely apart. She took the greatest pains to inquire into the principles and character of the lady she engaged—her morals and her sentiments. She constantly conversed with her, that she might ascertain these important points, and improve her by imparting her own superior thoughts and feelings. Convinced that “knowledge is the parent of love, and wisdom love itself,” she was anxious to share both, and by so doing gained a friend as well as an instructress for her daughter. While Lady Rockingham’s groundwork was vanity, Mrs. Somerset had higher ends in view. Dancing was taught not as an exhibition, but because an agreeable and graceful deportment is the attribute of a lady, and a means of usefulness in recommending good. “Good manners are a perpetual letter commendatory.” “No great mind,” says Dr. Johnson, “despises little things, but is great in great things, elegant in little things.” And a greater than he has said, “He that contemneth little things, shall fall by little and little.” The one proceeds from a disregard to all feelings but our own, while true courtesy

consists in shrinking from unnecessarily giving pain. With other accomplishments and dress, Mrs. Somerset acted on the same principle: they were, in her opinion, component parts of education in all persons whose birth or fortune placed them in an independent position. To fashion she was indifferent. There was no cause to suppose she would be unsought; for, in addition to the sweetest manners and a most pleasing appearance, "affection, kindness, and the sweet offices of duty and love, had been from her tenderest years as needful to her as her daily bread;" and these she imparted so freely to all around her, that while her superiority was generally acknowledged, none were made to feel that she considered any inferior to herself. The Abbey was only ten miles from Staunton, and Lord Rockingham and Mr. Somerset had always maintained a friendly intercourse. With Mrs. Somerset Lady Rockingham had also been on terms of intimacy, for though she could not patronise her, she considered her an agreeable acquaintance. There could be little congeniality between two such minds; but Mrs. Somerset was always anxious to make allowance for the want of education, prejudice, and early influences. "The true Christian temper does not show itself in mountains of pride and self-opinion, but dwells low in the valleys of humility, self-denial, and spiritual dejection; and as it behaves

itself thus towards God, so it demeans itself with a proportionable condescension to men too. The true Christian is apt to think others better and holier than himself, for his conscience teaches him to think the worst of his own heart, and his charity prompts him to judge best of his neighbour's¹." At first she had hoped to do good, but finding no opening for the admission of better feelings, she still felt that where no open immorality exists, separation is unjustifiable, and while it makes good be evil spoken of, will never be the means of winning souls to God. Although not an advocate for girlish association, she allowed her daughter to accompany her in her visits to the Abbey. In Catherine she found no companion. Her pleasure was in the exhibition of her talents, or in the hope of being admired. She had early imbibed the notion that beauty was the only real attraction, and her constant occupation was its preservation and adornment; her only conversation, the effect she hoped to produce. In Mademoiselle Soissons, her French governess, she found a ready listener. She was a true Frenchwoman, knew the last Parisian fashion, and would not for worlds have worn a last year's dress or bonnet. In her Catherine found a kindred spirit; and whenever Geraldine Somerset, who was

¹ South's Sermons.

still dressed as a school-room girl, came to the Abbey, her remarks were full of ridicule and contempt when she was out of sight. There was something too dignified and self-possessed in both mother and daughter, not to force her to keep within the bounds of courtesy in their presence. She was tall and finely formed, with a clear complexion, high colour, dark hair, and flashing black eyes. Her features were delicate, and if the mind had not reflected its unamiable character, she might have been pronounced beautiful. Matilda, on the contrary, was a sweet, gentle-looking girl, with soft blue eyes, dark eyelashes, and light brown curls. Quite as graceful in her movements as her sister, she was more modest and retiring. While the one commanded admiration, the other seemed to ask for affection. Catherine read nothing but novels, while Matilda steadily improved her mind by the study of useful and instructive books. Of religious works she knew little ; but by degrees Geraldine introduced her own library, in which her mother's judicious mind and elegant taste had placed all that could refine and elevate the feelings, confirm the judgment, and instruct the understanding. In Matilda Mertoun Geraldine found one whom she could love, and the two were constant companions during the interchange of visits between the Abbey and Staunton Park.

Geraldine was a lovely girl, tall, and beautifully made. Her beauty was of that intellectual and spiritual nature that draws all into the sphere of its attraction without desiring or perceiving it. "There are some natures, like the suns of some moral system, obliging the looks, thoughts, and hearts of others to gravitate around them. Their moral and physical beauty is a spell, their fascination a chain, love is but an emanation." Such was Geraldine. Hers was more than beauty—an expression of heavenly graces, which disarmed even envy itself. While Catherine excited envious and jealous feelings from her assumption of superiority, while Matilda's absence of all pretence and extreme gentleness exposed her to the slights of more energetic minds, there was in Geraldine that influence which mind has over matter, and none could be in her presence without a feeling of reverence, love, and admiration. Her wish was always to make others happy, and to do good; and if any one who saw how invariably her appearance gave pleasure ventured to detract, it met with no response. Catherine, who could bear no rival near her, found that "where there is real merit, it is not robbed by artifice or detraction, and that it does but increase by such endeavours of its enemies. The impotent pains which are taken to injure, or diffuse it among a crowd to its injury, naturally produces the contrary

effect: the fire will blaze out, or burn up all that attempt to smother what they cannot extinguish." Although Catherine might be an earl's daughter, she was not in reality better born than Geraldine Somerset, and it was only the vulgar pride of her ill-educated mother which made her suppose that she was her superior. To Geraldine, equality of mind and refinement of manner were far more than mere name or station. She gave the latter its proper due, but in the former she found a continued stream of enjoyment. It may be in some minds a proud thing to be nobly descended, but to be such that none ask who you are, is far beyond it. In the one case, "like some vegetables, the best part is under ground¹;" in the other, the tree is ever flourishing, shadowing with its branches, and nourishing with its fruit. Occasionally Lady Rockingham allowed Matilda to remain at Staunton Park, for she felt her a restraint upon her. Although Matilda manifested no disapprobation of her mother's frivolity or her sister's vanity, the simple fact of her appearing uninterested was a tacit reproof, so that she was not sorry to be freed from what she regarded as an unpleasant surveillance. Mrs. Somerset always encouraged her in the greatest deference to her mother's wishes. It was no part of her religion to teach the daughter to despise

¹ Dr. Johnson.

the mother ; on the contrary, she invariably endeavoured to soften her glaring defects, and gloss over such as were less upon the surface. Her object was to teach truth, and leave condemnation to Him, “who judgeth not by the seeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, but judgeth righteous judgment.” If Matilda saw her mother’s faults, it was with sorrow, and a desire by the most winning manner, and attention to her wishes, to gain her over to better thoughts. Time passed on, whilst things still remained in this state, and we must now ask the reader to accompany us to another part of the country, and visit Langdale Park, where a very different kind of family resided.

CHAPTER III.

LANGDALE PARK was a very lovely spot, with no pretensions to size or splendour, but containing all in itself that could give enjoyment to a cheerful and contented mind. Happiness consists not so much in what a man has, as in what he can enjoy ; and if this were the world's estimate, how much less disappointment and sorrow there would be ! “ Our neighbour's eyes are the most expensive of all articles, and what our neighbour thinks, the most important. In the mean while, the present is past, and we live in hope of a future which may never come, or, if realized, may be such as to occasion a sad retrospection of lost enjoyments, and an utter destruction of the foolish expectations in which we have indulged. The child is impatient to become a man, the man hopes for honour and riches, and the aged still live in a visionary state. Each neglects the time for sowing seed in the expectation of the fruit which is never to come. Such was the case with Lady

Sophia Cumberland. In the possession of a kind husband, two sons, a naturally amiable daughter, and a handsome fortune, she was a disappointed and a discontented woman. The only daughter of the Marquis of Arlington, she had inherited the beauty and fortune of her mother, about five thousand a year, while her father's title and estate had gone to the son of his younger brother. Her mother died when she was an infant, and she was left to the doating affection of her father, who never married again. He could not bear to have her contradicted, and it was only by management and promises of indulgence, that her governess could make her learn even the commonest rudiments of instruction. She was warm-hearted, and not by any means of a bad disposition, but from always living with older persons who gave way to her in every thing, she was unconsciously a most selfish child. As an only one, she was treated with the greatest deference ; and if ever with other children, her manner was so overbearing and disagreeable, that her absence was never regretted. She was quite without accomplishments, for she disliked the trouble of acquiring them ; and her father, who was little more than an aristocratical farmer, could see no use in them. Having no home interest, all her time was passed in seeking excitement and amusement. She was never happy

without a pleasure in possession or one in prospect, and Miss Darton, her governess, had no rest. As she grew older, it was more difficult to satisfy or even please her. Her pony, her doll, her garden, out of which no bouquet ever arose, for no sooner had she planted a flower than she constantly uncovered the seeds to watch their progress ; all these innocent amusements were becoming insipid. Though a very beautiful girl, she would scarcely allow her maid time to dress her ; and it was not until she accidentally discovered in her father's library a store of old novels, where love, as it is called, is made the business of life and the end of all earthly existence, that she learned to appreciate her loveliness, or think it necessary to set it off. Hitherto, Miss Darton had vainly endeavoured to impress upon her the propriety of smooth curls, and at least a tidy appearance ; for Sophia would often appear before Lord Arlington's guests with her disordered ringlets floating over her shoulders, her shawl falling off, her frock torn with attempts to penetrate impassable hedges, and her feet wet from wading like one of her favorite heroines through sparkling rivulets. Most fortunately for her, when she had attained her seventeenth year, a distant cousin, a young officer in the Guards, came on a visit to Arlington, for the shooting season. To his great surprise, on bringing his horses to the stables, he

found Sophia busily engaged, with the assistance of a small groom, in combing her horse's mane and making his bed. It would be impossible to describe Henry Cumberland's astonishment, and but for the youthful appearance of her companion, he would have imagined that he had interrupted an interesting flirtation with one of the servants. There was, notwithstanding the circumstances, something in Sophia's look and manner which could not be concealed by her extraordinary dress or the strangeness of her occupation; and when she raised her large laughing eyes to the young tiger, who, to do her justice, had grown up under her care as the gardener's son, while her rich brown curls fell carelessly over her delicate but rosy cheeks, and her white and prettily-formed hand rested on the neck of her horse, he thought he had never seen a more lovely creature. Sophia for the moment felt ashamed and blushed deeply, but soon recovering herself, she remembered how often heroines appeared in strange situations, and her gaiety returned. Making a low curtsy, with a demure face belied by a merry eye, she asked to whom she might have the pleasure of doing the honours of the stable. "I must, indeed, fair lady, return the question," replied Henry; "for though to judge by what my eyes see, I should suppose you to be a friend of our young esquire's, a deeper thought reveals to me my

fair cousin." Sophia, who delighted in fun, soon caught his humour, and a very few minutes placed them upon the most amicable terms. It was not, however, Henry Cumberland's intention to encourage her in such vagaries. While he laughed with her, he took every opportunity of making her feel the extreme impropriety of such conduct at her age: he represented to her father the necessity of her being properly introduced, and offered his mother as a chaperone. By degrees he gained an insensible but powerful influence over Sophia; and by representing all the pleasure and amusement London affords in the season, and especially the delight of exhibiting her beautiful horse Gazelle in the park, he succeeded in persuading Lord Arlington to take possession of the family mansion in Grovesnor Square, in the spring. As her will was her father's law, all was soon arranged. The antediluvian maid was replaced by a fashionable lady's-maid, who filled her young mistress's ear with accounts of balls and parties, till she sighed for April, the time fixed upon for their moving. The contempt with which Sophia's wardrobe was regarded was unbounded; and she assured her that it was positively necessary that she should go to London to be properly dressed, before the house was filled with winter company. Sophia was quite willing. It was a new kind of excitement, and a secret

desire to please her cousin had taken possession of her mind. Accustomed from her earliest years to society, she was by no means ungraceful in her movements, and, when dressed by Mrs. Murray, nobody would have recognized the wild girl, who had hitherto seldom been seen otherwise than as a romp, peeping slyly into the drawing-room, or tearing across the park on her pony. The first day she came in to receive her father's friends, dressed by the careful hand and taste of her new maid, every eye was turned towards her, and none more admiringly than that of Henry Cumberland. A suitable *dame de compagnie* took the place of Miss Darton, who was not neglected or forgotten. She had a handsome pension settled on her by Lord Arlington, and many presents from Sophia, who took much pleasure in preparing a small cottage which belonged to her father as a home for her. On arriving in London, Lady Mary Cumberland was ready to receive her cousin, anxious, if possible, to prevent her doing any thing extraordinary: but Sophia's quickness and intelligence soon made her sensible of the importance of attending to the etiquette of society, added to which she was most anxious to please Henry, who had not passed so many weeks at Arlington without becoming an object of interest to her. Admirers of an heiress of Sophia's rank and fortune are not wanting, particularly of the latter. Earls

and marquises' daughters are abundant, but five thousand a year, accompanied by good connexions, is a rare accident in the fashionable world, more especially with youth and beauty added to it. Many were the pauper coronets laid at her feet, but she had a secret talisman against them, and, while she smiled on all, her heart was not hers to give. Henry Cumberland was a younger son it is true, and had little besides his pay as a captain in the Guards, but she had enough for both, and was, as yet, too unsophisticated not to prefer an unincumbered income with a man she loved, to repairing the scattered patrimony of some heartless man of fashion, who would regard her only as a part of a bargain, with which he would willingly dispense, were it possible to possess the fortune without her. Her cousin was an honourable man, and had taken no undue advantage of the many opportunities his relationship gave him to secure her affection. He left her wholly at liberty; and though he danced with her when they met, and dined often at Lord Arlington's, no word or look had led her to suppose him more than a cousin. Accident favoured her wishes, for during one of the rides in the park, "Gazelle," who, like his mistress, was perfectly untamed, became so excited by the presence of so many of his species, and so alarmed by the band, that he suddenly became quite unmanageable, and dashed down Rotten

Row at his greatest speed. Sophia was a perfect horsewoman, but all was in vain, for coming in contact with a cabriolet, he fell with the greatest violence and precipitated her under the wheels of a carriage. Had it not been standing still nothing could have saved her life. She was taken up quite insensible, while her distracted father, who had lost all presence of mind, could do nothing. Henry had, however, followed her as near as he could without exciting her horse to greater speed, and was now at hand to rescue her from her perilous position. He lifted her gently, and having placed her in the carriage under which she had fallen, saw her home, and did not leave the house till he had the happiness of hearing that consciousness was restored, and that the physician spoke confidently of her recovery. Lady Mary never left her; and it was when he was allowed to go into her boudoir, and in the intimacy and absence of form in a sick room, that he was betrayed into showing feelings to which Sophia was not slow in responding. Lord Arlington at first was much disappointed that his beautiful daughter should throw herself away upon a younger son, but as he cared more for quiet than any thing else, and was conscious that he had no control over his daughter or her fortune, beyond that of affection, his consent was not long withheld; and Sophia's marriage, with the lace dress, orange-

flower wreath and veil, was duly announced in the "Morning Post." The happy pair set out for Langdale Park, and fancied themselves at the summit of happiness. For a short time the delusion was a pleasant one. It had been on both sides what is called a love-marriage; but love that has no foundation beyond admiration is apt to pass away quickly, leaving little but coldness and disappointment in its place. In likes and dislikes people and things are too often associated. They are the medium of present amusement, when, if separated from association, little but the name would be left. Those who view life at a distance are far better judges of reality, than the actors in the scene; to them each performer is unveiled. No borrowed lustre surrounds them, while the sharers in all that accompanies certain individuals are apt to imagine that the giver, and not the gift, is the object of their love. Like the man who bought Punch, they find the actors puppets. All that gave life is gone with the showman. Thus it was with Lady Sophia Cumberland: she had had no mother to guide her. Miss Darton, like many respectable elderly maidens, thought love and marriage no subject of conversation for young ladies. Her own notions on this most important part of education were abstract, and the few ideas she had received drawn from books or her own dear old-fashioned mother, so that she was quite

unfit to instruct a young girl in Sophia's position. She had only novels as her guide, and imagined that as all the cares and vexations of the heroine ceased as soon as the marriage ring encircled her finger, it was the same in real life. How many make shipwreck of happiness by similar mistaken notions. Far from being the death of care, a wedding-day may be truly called its birth ; and it rests perhaps in the first three months after that event, whether marriage becomes what it should be, the most perfect union on earth and one for eternity, or a miserable bondage, two unfortunate beings dragging a chain through life, which sin or death can alone loosen. After a time, and often a very few weeks are enough, the lover becomes the husband. The excitement of mere admiration passes, but where there are essential qualities is changed into deep-rooted esteem. Instead of foolish compliments and childish toying, the bride becomes the wife, the companion of her husband's domestic hours, the sharer of his pleasures, honours, and occupations. Her home is always bright, and she is ever ready to receive him with the cheering influence of unselfish love. Secure in his affection, no mean jealousies interfere to destroy confidence. His friends are hers, her friends are his. Their pleasures are mutual. She has no female confidants, the sure destroyers of all domestic comfort, to whom she

details all her husband's faults and her own imagined wrongs.—“Perfect love casteth out fear.” If she has difficulties of temper to contend with, she keeps them to herself. She no longer expects undivided attention. It is not in the nature of things that it should be so; and if it were, where would be our statesmen or lawyers, in short, any men of use in their generation? The wife is a part of her husband, and, in being so, she alone secures a lasting affection. It would have been happy for Lady Sophia, if she could have responded to such feelings; while she fancied that she loved her husband, she was only loving herself. Any person who can desire the object of their affection to give up all for them, is a selfish person. It is not the happiness of another that is rejoiced in, but that our own is secured by the devotion of that other to ourselves. Real affection is that which desires the good of another, and is anxious to give pleasure, whether or not any return is made—to live out of self, in others—to make their enjoyment ours—content to share it when legitimately given, but not to monopolize it. By so doing, two become one in heart and mind. The pleasure of communication where feelings are understood, the delight of sympathy, warms the heart; and the consciousness of one ever near, on whom our happiness is a reflected light, gives a possession in the heart, which all the exacted

attentions produced by tears and discontent can never gain. A spoiled and petted child from infancy, her every word, thought, and action of the first importance, Lady Sophia had no idea of ever being a secondary consideration, and when, after six weeks of uninterrupted seclusion, her husband expressed a wish that his mother and sisters should be invited to Langdale Park, she thought herself grievously ill-used, and indulged for some hours in a most unamiable fit of sullenness. Unconscious of any wish, but that of making Lady Mary and his sisters better acquainted with his young wife, Henry Cumberland could hardly understand how he could have offended. It was therefore with much surprise, that, on returning from his usual ride, in which Lady Sophia had refused, on the pretence of a headache, to accompany him, he found a cold reception, which was soon followed by tears and reproaches. He represented the difficulty of explaining to his mother, why the invitation she had herself so freely given, should not be sent, now that a longer time had passed than her own wishes had assigned to their retirement. He also tried to persuade her that society had its claims, and that as a married woman and the mistress of Langdale Park, hospitality was part of her duty, and that she could not expect to pass her whole time in amusement as she had done at Arlington. All this was

very unpalatable to the ungoverned mind and feelings of Lady Sophia, but seeing that her husband was really in earnest, she consented with a bad grace, and the invitation was sent. The frequent recurrence of such scenes soon alienated the affection, though it could not diminish the kindness, of her husband, and he constantly endeavoured to please her, whenever her requirements were not ridiculous or irrational. It was, however, quite thrown away; and finding that her continued ill-temper had the effect of lessening rather than increasing their opportunities of meeting, she turned her mind towards other excitements. Many was the time when her husband would have gone to her boudoir on his return from hunting or shooting, if he had not dreaded his reception,—many were the hours passed in the stable or the kennel, which would have been given to his wife. How often is a noble and generous affection thus frittered away! How much happiness lost! If instead of foolish reproaches for the loss of attentions which after a time mean nothing, a real solid affection were grafted on principle, by the wife proving herself a component part of her husband's comfort and happiness, we should seldom see the miserable marriages and disjointed affections so sadly *frequent* in the world. Neither Captain or Lady Sophia Cumberland were religious people. He was what

is called a kind-hearted man of the world. Had he married Ellen Somerset, he might, and probably would, have become a valuable character. As it was, his affections were wasted, his habits became restless, and both were anxious to turn from themselves and find excitement elsewhere. Leaving Langdale Park—where they had the means of surrounding themselves with agreeable society, where they might have found happiness in active benevolence, where their position secured them esteem and regard—they took a house at a fashionable watering-place for the winter. Lady Sophia, like many weak women, determined to excite, if possible, jealousy in her husband's mind by flirting with every man she met. Even if Henry Cumberland had really treated her with neglect, or insulted her by immorality, such a proceeding could only lessen her in his regard, make her less worthy of it, and injure herself. It is to such feelings that many a young creature is sacrificed. Disappointed in her husband as a lover, she seeks attention elsewhere; and without a thought beyond that of giving pain, finds herself involved in inextricable difficulty, and perhaps lost for ever. Happily for Lady Sophia she still loved her husband, in her own selfish way, too much, for more than a cold and heartless flirtation, which, while it fed her vanity, led to nothing more fatal than the contempt of many, and the avoid-

ance of the modest and well-conducted. The winter was followed by years of London and Paris gaieties. Two sons and a daughter had much added to her husband's happiness ; who, while he deeply regretted his wife's folly, and by his constant presence protected her from more serious consequences, turned with interest and refreshment to the innocent pleasures of his children. It was after the birth of the youngest, Edith, that Lady Sophia had a most alarming illness. For many months she hovered between life and death, and many more passed before returning health appeared. During the time of her convalescence she met, at one of the many places she tried for change of air, with Mrs. Watson. This lady was the wife of a clergyman in the neighbourhood, one whose profession of religion, at a time when it was not, as it is now, a fashion, had been her passport into a sphere of society from which an unrefined mind and want of education would have excluded her. She found an easy dupe in Lady Sophia. No longer young, her beauty, which had never been of an intellectual kind, was nearly gone, and her mind in a wandering and uncomfortable state. She was like a person turned out of one habitation without having secured another, ready to accept the first offer of a home. No longer an object in a world which values people and things according to the end to be gained,

in her own sphere of comparatively little importance, she welcomed any body who would satisfy her insatiable appetite for praise or admiration. Mrs. Watson approached her at first by compassion. She commiserated her delicate state of health, and incessantly praised her wonderful patience. She then gently touched on the apparent indifference of her husband, a subject which drew tears from Lady Sophia's eyes. "Oh, Mrs. Watson, you cannot think how deeply I feel it, and how cruelly he neglects me!" and she raised her eyes to Heaven, as if she were the most pitiable of mortals. If Mrs. Watson had been a really right-minded person, she would have endeavoured to soften such feelings, and have gently led her suffering friend to the contemplation of her own heart, the real source from whence her unhappiness arose. This was no part of her system. Her desire was to gain an influence; and, being artful as well as clever, her first attempt was to impress upon Lady Sophia's weak and uninstructed mind that all around her were wrong, and that in trying to please her husband she was turning from her God. She humoured her in her illness, which had become purely imaginary, nervousness and temper being all that remained. She flattered her incessantly, secured herself constant access to her boudoir, where she introduced mawkish and enervating books, under the name of religion, being little more than the

reflection of diseased and morbid feeling, totally unfitting her for the active duties of life, without in the least assisting to correct her temper or making her useful. By degrees she introduced her husband, a prejudiced man who constituted his opinion as the true religion, and looked upon all not wholly guided by himself as unworthy of regard. Instead of directing Lady Sophia in her own path of duty, he levelled her to his, unmindful that the duties of each were of an entirely different character. Unaccustomed to the elegancies which to her were second nature, he was constantly inveighing against dress or ornament of any kind, disregarding the fact that there is more pride and vanity in an affected singularity, than in an appearance which, from its similarity to others, leaves the wearer one of the multitude, and consequently unobserved. Lady Sophia being a weak and impressible woman, and so ignorant that she was ready to receive any absurdity willingly, followed his advice, and passed a great deal more time than she had done in her gayest days in describing the peculiar shape of her gown, more especially as its extreme plainness rendered its exact fitting of more importance. Her lady's-maid was in despair. Hitherto a simple order had been given and no more thought attached to it, but now consultations were unceasing. All the ornaments were dismissed from the drawing-room, to the delight of

the housemaids, who had much more time on their hands for less rational occupation than that of keeping them in order, and misused it, greatly to their satisfaction, by reading miserable novels from a poor circulating library, and in flirting with the men-servants. Lady Sophia vainly endeavoured to persuade her husband that it was his duty to dismiss his coachman and grooms, and sell the horses ; but being a man of plain common sense, and his income a large one, it was impossible to persuade him that it would be right to make beggars of their wives and children, to drive the men to ale-houses, or to other places where they might be exposed to far worse temptations than in his quiet and regular establishment. His mind had undergone a serious change, which might have been lasting had it been founded on principle, or met with encouragement. The total absence of all domestic comfort, and the dislike he had to the disagreeable people by whom his wife was constantly surrounded, had led him to more useful occupations. He read a good deal, took much interest in the welfare of his tenants and dependents, became an active magistrate, and found much pleasure in the society of his children. By making himself the companion of his eldest son, who was about twelve, he had become his friend ; and had he continued to do so, the sad effects of his neglected education

might have been prevented, but his constant absence from home led to much evil. Those who would maintain a lasting sway over young people, must, by softening the distance of age, steal into their confidence. Love and respect are united ; but if fear once closes the avenues to the heart, no other sentiment ever overcomes it ; obedience is then never led by inclination ; and we rejoice to escape from haughtiness to austerity, however venerable the form they may assume. From what trifles spring the purest pleasures of life. A prospect, a flower, a song, can dilate the heart while the passions are yet hid in it, nor have poisoned its simplicity, nor curtailed its enjoyments ; but where there is a want of confidence, concealed pleasures will take the place of those which become greater when shared with those we love. In many minds, to deceive the watchful reflects a compliment on our own sagacity, and renders them insensible to the error. “The immense defect that want of sympathy is, may be strikingly seen in the failure of the many attempts that have been made in all ages to construct a Christian character without it. It has produced numbers of people walking up and down one narrow plank of self-restraint, pondering over their own merits and demerits, keeping out, not the world, but their fellow-creatures from their hearts, and caring only to drive their neigh-

bours before them on this plank of theirs, or to push them headlong. Thus, with much hard work in the formation of character, we have had splendid bigots, or censorious small people."

Of this latter class Lady Sophia was one; for she passed the greater part of her time in talking of the defects of her neighbours, in censuring their dress, style of living and habits, and in measuring their expenses. She had with much difficulty persuaded Colonel Cumberland to give the living of Langdale, which had become vacant, to Mr. Watson. Nothing but the consciousness that in real point of fact it was his own, would have induced him to consent. The struggle was a painful one, for he foresaw all the consequences, and that his peace and comfort would be disturbed more than ever. Langdale Park was not more than five miles from Staunton, and about ten from the Abbey. It was therefore natural that there should be an intimacy between the families, though one more of circumstances than choice. Mrs. Somerset was always ready to hold out the right hand of fellowship; and while she deeply regretted the misery consequent upon Lady Sophia Cumberland's mistaken notions, she believed her sincere, and was always kind and cordial. She hoped to conciliate by kindness, and without in the least departing from the received principles on which she invariably acted, she was ready to

yield in matters of little importance. Though principle gives birth to rule, motives may justify exceptions ; and those only follow our Saviour's example who are "kindly affectioned to all." It is the absence of steadiness in our own principles more than the want of it in others, that makes association dangerous. In judging of others, *three* things should be considered ; justice, charity, and generosity. Much allowance should be made for ignorance and prejudice. What may be a great offence in one may be comparatively little in another, when the relative advantages and disadvantages of each are taken into consideration. Narrow-minded people who have not a thought beyond the sphere of their own vision, measure all others by their own idea, without any regard to totally different circumstances, position, or education ; and by thus doing others injustice, destroy all the influence they might otherwise have had. The snail sees nothing but its own shell, and thinks it the grandest place in the world. So it is with narrow minds. All feelings are ground down to their own preconceived notions ; and placing their minds and circumstances in others, they measure them accordingly. It would be well were they to try themselves by the same test, for reflected faults present themselves in their true light, and when seen in others, expose their deformity. We often unconsciously tole-

rate in ourselves what we cannot bear with common patience in others, and generally condemn what is deficient, forgetful that the defect may be in ourselves.

It was at the time of our introduction to these families that the daughters of each house were on the eve of that eventful period, commonly called "coming-out." The feelings of each were very different. Lady Catherine Mertoun looked forward to it as a season of triumph and conquest. Her object was to secure a brilliant establishment. Her whole education had tended to this end ; and Lady Rockingham had every hope of being gratified. Her daughter had no heart, or, if it existed at all, it had never been called into action. All her pleasures were centred in worldly gratifications. Great care had been taken that she should be seen as little as possible in general society during the last year of her noviciate, and it was with a palpitating heart that her mother, "rouged and repaired for an ungrateful public," prepared herself and her daughter for her first campaign in the fashionable world. Catherine was in ecstasies. The greater part of every day was passed in earnest consultations with Mademoiselle Soissons, a constant correspondence maintained with the sister modiste in Paris, and the last and newest fashions secretly imported. It was the height of their puerile ambition to be

seen in what nobody else had worn, and they would on no account have given a pattern. The dancing-master was in daily attendance, that the curtsy at the presentation might be perfect ; so that in her over-anxiety to produce an astounding effect, nature was entirely extinguished ; and Catherine came out almost as stiff and formal as her aunts, with a beauty that dazzled rather than charmed. Her proud and cold manner kept affection at a distance, and none but an elder son dared approach her. Still the possessor of twenty thousand pounds was not to be despised ; and many adorers of money and rank were to be seen at her feet. Mrs. Somerset, who, since her husband's death, had lived in comparative retirement, and who would gladly have remained in the shade, felt it her duty to introduce her daughter, and by returning to her place in society, make agreeable friends for her son, who was sixteen, and would in a few years, from his large fortune and expectations as the next heir to the Duke of Ormanton, be an object of considerable importance. Affection was her only hold upon him ; and she was determined to make his home agreeable, so as to lessen the desire for amusement abroad. Geraldine Somerset had realized the promise of beauty she had given as a child. The cultivation of her mind had given a thoughtfulness to her lovely features, the sweetness of her dispo-

sition an expression which touched the heart. To her "coming out" had no magic sound. She had always been her mother's companion, and as she grew older had become her friend. They had no secrets ; and while Mrs. Somerset avoided saddening her youthful feelings by her own painful recollections, she had shared in the experience and occupations to which her separation from worldly excitements naturally gave rise. There were no grand preparations. What had been her early habit easily returned, and, accustomed to society, Mrs. Somerset only felt as if she were returning after a residence elsewhere to old associations. She had no desire to produce a sensation, no wish that Geraldine should eclipse others ; and while Lady Rockingham was anxiously desiring that Catherine might far surpass all others, Geraldine was only anxious to pass quietly and unobserved, in a crowd from which she rather shrank with timidity. The eventful day at last arrived. Lady Rockingham and Mrs. Somerset presented their daughters, and had no reason to be dissatisfied with the effect. It was with pleasure that Mrs. Somerset saw Catherine admired ; and she congratulated her mother, who was far from sharing in her amiable feelings, as her keen eye had detected the much more lingering looks cast upon Geraldine. While every body exclaimed, and almost started at the magnificent beauty of

her daughter, the eye rested with pleasure on her companion ; and Lady Rockingham could scarcely restrain her indignation when some good-natured friend kindly insinuated that the Queen had admired the simple elegance of Miss Somerset more than the elaborate toilette of Lady Catherine.

"I thought," said an old lady sitting next to Lady Rockingham, "that Mrs. Somerset was too serious to bring her daughter out in London?"

"Oh no," she replied, "she has only been keeping her out of sight to make her more remarkable as a novelty."

"I wonder," added Lady Verney, "how she contrives to know so well how to dress her ; any body would think that she had just come from Paris."

"I don't know, for I can assure you that it has been an impenetrable mystery. Catherine made several vain attempts to pierce the secret, but whenever she called, Geraldine affected to know nothing about her dress, and to leave it all to her mother. Indeed, Catherine says that she never saw any thing but books and music on her table, and nothing in her private sitting-room but frocks for poor children."

"What affectation ; and all the time it is plain that she thinks about it quite as much as we do. All Miss Somerset's affected simplicity is only a superior art. I had much rather see

your beautiful daughter, who pretends to no such nonsense."

"Oh, Catherine is just what I like. There is no nonsense in her, and no danger of her falling in love with any body not able to give her position; but I really do believe that young Lord Lornton is actually talking to Geraldine, while Catherine is all alone."

With this distressing sight in view, Lady Rockingham sailed away in majestic style, while Lady Verney turned round and observed to her neighbours:

"What a proud, disagreeable woman Lady Rockingham is, and that haughty-looking daughter, I wonder how any body can admire her; I hope she will be disappointed, I hate her: but here comes Mrs. Somerset."

She immediately arose from her seat, and approaching her with an affected smile, praised Geraldine in the most unmeasured terms, making contemptuous comparisons between her and Catherine. Mrs. Somerset, much too acute to be taken in by her insincerity, was not indifferent to Lady Verney's unkind remarks, and observed, that she thought it unfair to judge a young girl on her first introduction into society; that Catherine had been brought up to consider herself of great importance, and to attach much consequence to her

beauty, but that a little general association would teach her to view things in a different light.

“Oh,” said Lady Verney, “you are so kind and considerate. How different to Lady Rockingham, who is always saying ill-natured things; but pray let me have the pleasure of being introduced to Miss Somerset.”

Geraldine received her proffered hand without *empressement*. She had felt sorry for Catherine, and would have been too happy if she could have made any impression on her. She comforted herself with the consciousness of having been of use to her younger sister; and Lady Rockingham would scarcely have forgiven Mrs. Somerset, had she known how completely she had succeeded in winning Matilda over to pure and elevated views of life. She was the greatest comfort to her father, the cheerful companion of her brother, and the friend of all the poor and afflicted around her in the country. It is not the intention of this little book to give a detailed account of the career of fashionable amusements in which Lady Rockingham and her daughter were constantly engaged. There was nothing to which they did not go. Operas, plays, races, public balls of all kinds, *déjeuners*, *matinées dansantes*, and the park on Sundays. They occasionally met Mrs. Somerset, but

although she wished to give Geraldine pleasure and to perfect her mind, by the education of life, she had no intention of allowing her to take part in any amusement in itself objectionable, so that she was never seen at public places : not that she blamed others for going ; on the contrary, she felt that many who attended them might be better than herself ; but to her they were wrong, because she felt them to be so, and by countenancing them she would have sinned against her conscience. To Geraldine she could scarcely explain all her reasons, but she met with no opposition from her. She always saw her mother act on principle ; she was under no bondage to party or opinion. Her desire was to do right, as in God's sight, and " she would much rather silently influence events serviceable to others, than have the praise of a multitude, whose dispraise might in all probability be far more to her credit." The only way " to silence envious tongues, is to preserve the virtue which occasions their malice, and those who expect to meet their reward in this world will be grievously mistaken." Little minds " hate the excellence they cannot imitate," and in trying to lessen it by detraction hope to raise themselves. There is no greater trial to a noble and generous mind than to be the subject of remark to little minds, who are wholly unable to appreciate the principles by which persons of ele-

vated and refined feelings are guided ; and among the trials of her present situation this was one from which Mrs. Somerset had much to bear. Lady Rockingham especially, who had very high ideas of the merits of a coronet, was greatly provoked to find that while she and her splendid daughter were invited to the crowded balls and state dinners, Mrs. Somerset and Geraldine were the intimate friends of persons who only interchanged common civilities with them. Attaching as she did all attraction to externals, the plain carriage and the establishment which in London as a widow Mrs. Somerset considered more suitable than great display,—the quiet, unostentatious, but elegant dress, and the entire simplicity and ease of her manners in a society in which she had breathed and moved from her earliest years,—were more or less subjects of contempt and envy to Lady Rockingham's *parvenu* notions. Fitted to take part in intellectual as well as in lighter conversation, Geraldine was always happy and at ease, wherever she was. She was neither servile with her superiors, nor forward. She neither felt honoured by attention, nor humbled by neglect. Fashionable she might be made, but nothing could increase or diminish her real position in the eyes of the right-minded. If neglected, she was amused and indifferent ; if

praised and admired, never elated. She was neither made or unmade by the smiles or frowns of self-elected queens, while she was happy in the affection and regard of all whose opinion she valued, and in the attentions which spring from esteem. Lady Rockingham in vain attributed the different reception she met with, to Mrs. Somerset's art or toadyism. All would not do ; and though her rank and the grand parties she gave, made her sufficiently courted to gratify her vanity, the quiet, unpretending Mrs. Somerset, and the amiable and unaffected Geraldine, made friends of all whose friendship was worth gaining, amused themselves in general society, and understood its nature and constitution too well to be made ridiculous by it. It is only the ignorant and weak who are ever caught by its glitter. The surface may be fair, but all who trust in it are lost. The vain and self-sufficient cannot believe that the same fate will be theirs, that has made victims of others. They take all the unmeaning things that are said for realities, and think that they are valued for themselves ; whereas, the attentions are either given, because pleasure from the association is received, or something is to be gained by them. From the really great impertinences are never met with. Even if the heart may not respond, refine-

ment gives courtesy to the manner; the certainty of position, repose; and thus prevents that contention for place and notice, which all who are made or unmade by the notice of the great invariably exhibit. No women make such good wives to poor men as the well-born; for though they may equally suffer from deprivation, and indeed from previous delicacy in their nurture are more susceptible, they never feel really lessened by an attention to their new duties, by simplicity in dress, or establishment. The mind which feels itself lowered by such self-denials is essentially vulgar, and, considering money and appearance as the only passports into society, naturally regards them as of the first importance. "It is too often found, that the fate of men of singular gifts of mind, is to be destitute of those of fortune. This in no way affects the spirit of wise judgments, who thoroughly understand the justice of the proceeding, and being enriched with higher donatives, cast a more careless eye on those vulgar parts of felicity. It is a great mistake to adore these complimentary and circumstantial pieces of felicity, and undervalue those perfections and essential points of happiness, wherein we resemble our Maker." While the admiration of the crowd is for the "richness of the gilding," the virtues of the poor are like those

of a good picture ill-framed. How many a sad and aching heart has driven from the church weeping over a ceremony which consigned it to splendid misery; while the recital in the newspaper has excited the envy of thousands, and the smiles of gratified pride and vanity in the relatives. On the other side, a marriage which has secured the satisfaction of every feeling of the heart sometimes excites the contempt of the world, the pity of friends, and the anger of relations. For those who have been accustomed to habits of refinement and riches to marry into poverty and vulgarity, merely from a foolish and passing feeling, unsanctioned by judgment, discretion, or the approbation of friends, it is the height of folly, and will, in most cases, be followed by reproach and misery. There must be reality of some kind, character and competency, talents and a profession. But where these exist, and a marriage is made in faith and prayer, a blessing will rest upon it. Trials there may and must be; but love of a pure and holy kind rather tightens than loosens the bonds by these difficulties. Each takes pleasure in lessening the care of the other. The approving smile, the answering mind, the delight of feeling that the affection and kindness of friends is disinterested, that the hus-

band is appreciated for his real worth, and not by what he gives, produces lasting happiness, when cemented by the only real bond of union, a Christian spirit. It is the love of Christ which constraineth, first purifying, then ratifying the most perfect of all unions, when it is thus consecrated by the grace of God.

CHAPTER IV.

THE London season was now nearly over, and after staying for the last ball, Lady Rockingham found herself obliged, most unwillingly, to return to the Abbey. It was a great mortification to take her daughter back with no prospect of a settlement, and she would often reproach her for mismanagement: a reproach Catherine received by no means gently, so that mutual recrimination was constantly taking place. Her brother would laugh at her and taunt her with her airs, while some more fortunate mother completed her mortification by affected sympathy. How bitter are the trials which pride and ambition are doomed to suffer! and how many a pang is spared to those who simply enjoying life as it is, can leave events in the hand of God! who, instead of struggling for pre-eminence, are content with the notice they receive, and by not seeking more than is freely given, escape the mortification which invariably falls to the lot of those who are always

thinking of themselves. "What breaks a proud man's heart, will not disturb a poor man's sleep." The affectionate Matilda took no part in the jokes of her brother, or the taunts of the mother, and was delighted to show her sister every possible kindness, pitied her listlessness, gave up her own occupations to pass her time with her, and affected an interest she could not feel, in her incessant repetition of all the foolish things she had said or heard at her balls and parties. Although Catherine seldom appreciated her devotion, it made no alteration in her conduct. She acted on principle, and never thought of return, except in the consciousness of having tried to do her duty, and in the hope that in time she might win her sister to love and happiness. Lord Rockingham was too much engrossed with his farm and other country amusements, to know much of what was going on around him ; but as soon as the shooting season came, Lady Rockingham persuaded him to invite a large party, and among them a stupid, half-witted young marquis, whom she hoped with a little manœuvring to make her son-in-law.

The Marquis of Davenport, without an idea of his own, or one created by education, with nothing pleasing in his person or manner, being very short, with a pale and sickly appearance, had been the victim of a foolish mother. In-

stead of impressing him with the great importance of the duties annexed to his position, and raising his mind to it, the fact of his being a rich nobleman, was the only one she considered of importance; that his nobility gave him the privilege of being ignorant, selfish, and unfeeling; and that to marry a wife who would add to his dignity, was all he need seek. He was on no account to sacrifice one iota of his magnificence by grafting intellect, talent, and sense on his coronet. A great match was to be his object. It was, therefore, with no small delight that Lady Davenport saw his preference for Lady Catherine Mertoun, and received with great satisfaction the invitation to the Abbey. Catherine was equally pleased to find that he had accepted it, and on the evening of his arrival she made the most *recherchée* toilette. To increase the dazzling whiteness of her skin, she arrayed herself in black velvet, and with a head-dress of pearls which softened her colour, she hoped, not to touch the heart, but to turn the head of her admirer. When the eventful day arrived, and the Abbey in all its splendour was thrown open for the large party expected, Catherine was careful not to be seen till the candles were lighted. Her maid found it very difficult to please her, and many were her attempts before she could succeed. Though dressed long before the hour for assembling in the drawing-room,

she contrived to delay her appearance until all the party had met, and then gracefully gliding in, she presented herself in her splendid beauty before Lord Davenport, who stood with eyes and mouth distended, making so ridiculous a figure, that Matilda and Geraldine, who were quietly sitting in a distant part of the room, could scarcely conceal their smiles, particularly when Lord Cornbury came up, and observed, that "Davenport looked like an expiring fish." Both Matilda and Geraldine felt so much pained at the idea of such a sacrifice, that the feeling of merriment soon passed away; and when they saw the self-satisfied air of Catherine, and the happy face of her mother, Matilda could scarcely repress her tears. Day after day passed, till Lady Rockingham was beginning to tremble, when accident favoured her wishes, for one day as the youthful part of the company were walking in the park, they were overtaken by a violent shower. Matilda and Geraldine ran at once to the gamekeeper's lodge; but Catherine, far too dignified to run, took refuge under a large weeping-willow. Whether the sentimental character of the tree influenced Lord Davenport's unsentimental nature, or whether the tenderness with which he enveloped the fair Catherine in his cloak, produced a sympathetic influence, it is impossible to say; but he delicately insinuated that he hoped his present permission to protect her,

might be allowed to continue ; and the rejoicing, not blushing lady, after a little well-acted perturbation, granted the petition, and consented to a contract in which she gave up herself to folly and sixty thousand a year, without a regret or even the sense of shame. In the mean time a carriage had been sent for her, and the satisfied pair returned home. Catherine immediately flew to her mother's boudoir, totally forgetful of her usual stately walk, and announced with the greatest delight, the happy termination of her anxiety. All disagreement between mother and daughter was at an end. Vanity, the reigning feeling of both, was gratified. The prospect of diamonds, carriages, and the means of all other worldly gratification, engrossed every thought. As to Lord Davenport he was wholly disregarded ; or if a wish passed through Catherine's mind that he had been better looking, or more agreeable, or a little less foolish, she dismissed it directly, considering him merely as the means to an end.

“ For, oh, what a world of vile ill-favoured faults,
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year.”

Shakspeare.

How much more then would such faults be concealed under sixty thousand ! Matilda, fully aware of the entire uselessness of all remonstrance, determined to make the best of it ; conscious that the safest path is that of silence, she received all remarks without reply,

and only observed that her sister had a right to please herself. In this Catherine had perfectly succeeded, for she could no more understand Matilda's noble and generous mind, than the latter could comprehend hers. The one lived for the eyes of the multitude, and could expand and flourish on envy and admiration, while Geraldine Somerset and Matilda had minds formed to love and be loved.

“To do good, and live
By soft endearments in kind strife,
Lightening the load of daily life.”

On her return from London, Geraldine had entered with renewed interest on all her duties and occupations. She and her mother were received with the greatest demonstration of heartfelt joy. The school children met them at the gate of the park. Mothers gazed with affection and blessings as they passed their cottages, and the rector of Staunton, Mr. Delville, with his wife and daughter, were ready as dear friends to receive them. Geraldine sprang from the carriage into Louisa Delville's extended arms. There was no sense of condescension on one side, or of favour on the other. If Mr. Delville had not been the perfect gentleman, and Mrs. Delville an elegant and refined woman, Mrs. Somerset would have felt, that as the minister of God, and the rector of her village, it was her duty to uphold him in every way. As it was, there existed an equality of mind which ren-

dered the whole family congenial, and without appearing to do so, Mrs. Somerset contrived in many ways to add to the little luxuries which Mrs. Delville before her marriage had been accustomed to see around her, and to lessen her labours by allowing her daughter to share in the instruction of Geraldine's governess. She was ever willing to make Mrs. Delville feel the favour on her side, as her daughter would find a companion a great enjoyment. With the delicacy of real refinement, she seemed the obliged, while in fact she was conferring a lasting benefit. Nor was it lost upon Mrs. Delville, who, though fully sensible of the amiable feelings of her friend, was equally alive to its cause, and accepted with pleasure, what, if done in a different way, would have given pain. There is nothing in which vulgarity or refinement is more exhibited than in giving and receiving. The vulgar take pleasure in impressing the obligation, in speaking of it, and in self-appreciation; while refinement desires no return but the consciousness of having given pleasure and the satisfaction of lessening anxiety,—the acceptance is considered a witness of affection and regard. In a noble and generous mind, the obligation is rendered double by the way in which it has been conferred; while in the other case a painful sense of humiliation is occasioned, which in a proud spirit causes anger and rejection; and in the humble Christian, an acute sense of

pain, in accepting what is evidently given without affection or consideration. "They that would increase must share," and "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth."

As neither Mrs. Somerset nor Geraldine had gone to London with any view but that of renewing old friendships and making new ones, they had returned quite satisfied and happy, although no brilliant match was in prospect, and Louisa Delville listened with much interest to her friend's descriptions of her innocent enjoyments. No envy disturbed their intercourse. Mrs. Somerset would have gladly taken Louisa to London and treated her as a daughter, but her father preferred her remaining at home till her principles were more settled. To her the scene might be more exciting than to Geraldine, who from circumstances had been earlier accustomed to mixed society than herself, and Louisa had cheerfully acquiesced in the decision of her parents, whose wishes were always a law to her. Geraldine had not forgotten her. A selfish pleasure was none to her, and many pretty tokens of love found their way to the rectory. The presents were proportioned to their connexions, and not to their fortune. God always sends necessaries to those who "walk uprightly;" but as is quaintly observed by a German writer, "though the ravens brought Elijah the food, it was not sent in silver dishes." Although silver dishes may be, and are quite unnecessary in a

quiet rectory, the absence of the little nothings which give a charm to the drawing-room, strikes those who have always been accustomed to them. Delicate minds take pleasure in supplying them ; while the vulgar like the poor to look poor, that their own superiority may be more complete. Mrs. Watson, to whom Lady Sophia never gave any thing but common vegetables or old dresses, viewed with much envy and indignation the elegant little drawing-room at Staunton rectory, though she did not think it at all strange, if Mrs. Somerset, who never wished to wound the feelings of any, occasionally presented her with some token of remembrance. Lady Sophia, whose delight was to patronise, and who had never found any opening for the exercise of this favourite passion with the Delvilles, who neither desired to be patronised nor cared for neglect, was extremely indignant that Louisa Delville should look as nice as her daughter, and she and Mrs. Watson passed much of their time in wondering how and where she got her dress : Mrs. Somerset on one occasion found them in vehement discussion as to the price of a gown, in which Louisa had called the day before, and both appealed to her to decide the important point. Mrs. Somerset, shocked at such meanness and want of delicacy, quietly answered that as Mrs. Delville had never asked her to pay her bills, she had not thought

it necessary to inquire into her expenses¹. It was in vain that Lady Sophia endeavoured to find out who sent her boys to school, and who paid the lady's-maid. Mrs. Somerset was impervious, and found it difficult to bear with such littleness. Such indeed was the nature of most of the nominally religious conversations between Lady Sophia and Mrs. Watson, and her evil influence was daily more and more visible. Colonel Cumberland finding no society at home, gradually withdrew himself, and was almost always visiting in the county or on shooting excursions. In consequence of his absence, the sons who were not to go to public schools from the fear of bad association, passed the greatest part of their time in the stables, were proud and overbearing, and, from being constantly with inferiors, had the most ridiculous notions of their consequence. Their father who at one time had enjoyed their company, now that they had ceased to be interesting as children, took little notice of them, while they regarded him with no affection and little respect. Indeed the eldest often began to think of the time when the "governor," the disrespectful term now applied to the endearing name of father, would walk off the course. He might be daily seen lounging at the park gates with his hands in his pockets, his cigar in his mouth, jesting with

¹ A fact.

and rudely staring at the simple country girls as they passed. The servants hated him, and all persons of refinement avoided him as much as possible. Edith, the daughter, was a sad looking girl ; she saw little of her mother ; was denied all books of entertainment and all amusement, and having no other occupation, became listless and dissatisfied. Mrs. Watson had persuaded Lady Sophia that Geraldine was too worldly-minded, and that her mother was quite unworthy of her friendship. She had even tried to insinuate that Colonel Cumberland's constant visits to Staunton Park were encouraged by her with feelings which did not do her credit, and many disagreeable scenes between her and her husband were the consequence. Such insinuations did no harm to any body but herself, and she was a miserable woman. Mrs. Somerset found it impossible to make the least impression, for Mrs. Watson, well aware that if once Lady Sophia were permitted free intercourse with her superior mind, the influence of truth and knowledge would prevail, instilled so much prejudice against her, that all attempts were vain. She would allow her to read no book but such as she provided for her, so that in entire ignorance of all but narrow-minded writings and party feelings, Lady Sophia was taught to consider all who thought differently to herself in the wrong. Even the publisher's name was

enough to deter her from reading a book. She would have received a Bible or Prayer Book with suspicion from Burns, and it is very much to be doubted if she would have read them. Edith was carefully watched, which made her cunning ; and it was with the greatest surprise, that, on meeting her one evening in a distant part of the park, Louisa Delville found herself seized upon with expressions of extreme happiness, on their having escaped from parental surveillance.

“Why,” said Louisa, “should you be afraid of your mamma ? I never think of running away from mine, and have no secrets from her.”

“Oh, but then Mrs. Delville is so different, she and Mrs. Somerset are more like kind elder sisters ! How I do envy you and Geraldine !”

“Do you not think,” replied Louisa, affectionately, “that the fault may be partly your own ? Are you quite sure that you try to please your mamma ?”

“Indeed I did try,” said Edith ; “but whenever I went to her room, I found her closeted with that odious Mrs. Watson, and really she is so disagreeable that I cannot bear her. She drives papa from home, disgusts my brothers, and makes me miserable. Oh, how I wish Mr. and Mrs. Delville were her friends instead ! I cannot think how mamma can like her, but all the people she likes are of the same kind. The

truth is, that mamma is no longer young or pretty, and likes to be a great lady, and these kind of people flatter her because they benefit by it."

"Stop, stop, dear Edith," said Louisa, "even if Lady Sophia is mistaken, you should never speak of her in this way. Is she not your mother? and no daughter should publish the faults of a parent, however deeply she may deplore them; your only remedy is in affection to her, prayer for her, and in forbearance with Mrs. Watson."

"As to affection, that is quite impossible, for I can never please her. Although I am not allowed to dance, she is always finding fault with me for being awkward and dressing ill, and every thing I do or say is wrong. How can I know what is right or proper from that odious Mrs. Watson, or those dreadful Miss Morningtons, whom she thinks models of fashion? Why, my maid, who lived once with Lady Verney, tells me that they dress like actresses."

"Well, dear Edith, I am quite sure that both Geraldine and I shall be most happy to lend you any patterns you may like, and if you will send your maid to the rectory, at any time, I will tell our Sarah to show her some of the pretty things Mrs. Somerset brought me from London."

"But when I have them, mamma will say that I am growing fond of dress; and Mrs. Watson has already tried all she can to persuade her

that I ought to make my own clothes, and give what my maid costs to her working society. Mary is quite in despair, as she and her sisters, who are in service, entirely maintain their mother, and apprentice their youngest sister to a dressmaker. I found her crying yesterday, but comforted her by telling her that papa would not allow it: besides you forget how far we are from Staunton, and that I cannot send Mary five miles."

"Well, but when you return our visit of to-day, which Lady Sophia will do, I can show you my presents, and Geraldine is always delighted to give patterns. She has none of the meanness which fears to see others like herself. How I wish you could see more of her. She is so gentle and superior, that she would do you much more good than I can."

"So do I, for I have lived with saints till I am tired of them. They are so dull. They take all away that is agreeable in this world, and give nothing in return but twaddle. Nothing makes me so cross as the incessant discussion I hear between mamma and Mrs. Watson, as to who is good and who is not; as far as I can make out they think nobody good but themselves. Because Geraldine looks like a lady, and occasionally goes to a ball, she is every thing that is bad; and you are worse than all, because, as mamma only likes people she can patronise, she is angry that any body likes you; that you

always look so nice, and your house so pretty, and every thing about you so much more as it should be, than it is at home ; and all the time Mrs. Watson gets all she can out of mamma ; and Mr. Watson tried very hard to have the use of papa's horses, but Charles took good care that he should not succeed ; and when we went away last summer had them turned out to grass. O how glad I was ! What would I give to get away !”

She had fairly talked herself out of breath, and bursting into tears, threw herself on a green bank, and covered her face with her handkerchief. Louisa was deeply pained ; for while she was sensible of the truth of much that she had heard, she was equally conscious that it was very wrong in Edith to talk of her mother as she had done, or for herself to listen to it. At the same time she felt that if no allowance were made she might lose all influence, and silently raised a petition for guidance to her Father in Heaven, strongly feeling the sin of setting a daughter against her mother. She waited till Edith was more composed, and then kissing her affectionately, said, “I feel very much for you, dear Edith, and the more so, as it grieves me that you should attribute to religion what has nothing to do with it. The word you speak so lightly, ‘saints,’ cannot be applied to Mr. and Mrs. Watson. They are, I fear, far from being such, and your mamma is

too simple-minded to see through them ; but do not, I pray you, confound the beautiful religion taught us by our Saviour, with the opinions of such weak and ignorant people. If you wish to win over Lady Sophia, you must do it by kindness and consideration, by making yourself of use to her. Perhaps, if you appeared more to need her love, she would gradually be more disposed to give it. Opposition seldom does good. It is better to undermine than uproot. Counteraction will often cure what violence only injures. Do not be angry if I tell you that you should never talk slightingly of your mamma : try to please her whenever you can without a compromise of principle ; and if she expects what is unreasonable, such as the dismissal of your maid, or your dressing unlike other people, you can tell her that your papa would not allow it. Above all, pray for God's grace, and you will find it much more easy to bear what is unpleasant, if you once feel that the trial is from God."

" Oh, Louisa ! how I wish I could feel as you do ! I will try to be more like you and Geraldine ; but somehow, when I meet Mrs. Watson at all hours on the stairs, and see the discomfort she occasions, it makes me so angry, that I cannot help tossing my head and answering her in a short and rude manner. Charles declares that he will stand it no longer ; and Edward is so stupified, that he seems half an idiot. Even

our old butler and housekeeper say that they will leave us if Madam Watson interferes as she does."

"Allowing all that you say to be true," Louisa replied, "patience, submission, and prayer are your only remedies. Silence will, I assure you, be far better than reproach; and instead of dwelling upon your mamma's or Mrs. Watson's faults, try to think of your many blessings, and pray, dear Edith, do not encourage the servants in talking of Lady Sophia: it is, I can assure you, very wrong, and it can only injure yourself. Much can be done in all difficulties, and if I can ever be a comfort to you, I shall be too happy to be so, and so would Mrs. Somerset and Geraldine. Perhaps we may meet oftener than we have done." She then kissed her affectionately, and remembering that she had a little book called "A Trap to catch a Sunbeam," she gave it to her.

At this moment Mr. Delville, who had left Louisa in the park, while he made some pastoral visits in a distant part of the parish, was seen in the distance. She ran to join him, and mounting her horse, which the groom was holding, rode away, happy in the perfect love and confidence subsisting between her and her parents, and sad at the recollection of the unhappy girl she had just left. She gave an account of her conversation to her father, anxious to know if she had done right, and received

with the greatest satisfaction his approval. It was a lovely summer's evening ; the moon was shedding its chastened light around them ; the song of the nightingale was the only sound, except the bleating of a sheep or the bay of a watchdog, as she and Mr. Delville rode side by side, in the calm and peaceful certainty of mutual affection. He was pleased but not proud to be the father of such a daughter, and felt more than repaid for all the care and anxiety of her education, in seeing her daily "learning to love that which God commands, and desiring that which He promises." As they drew near the rectory, Mrs. Delville was standing on the lawn, surrounded by a group of merry, well-ordered children, delighted to welcome them. Many glances of affection had shed their genial influence on them as they passed through their village ; for Mr. and Mrs. Delville lived among their people ; they gave their time and thoughts to their spiritual and temporal wants. Mrs. Somerset and her daughter were always ready to second them in every good work, their hearts and purses equally open to the cry or need of the poor. It was impossible for any school to be better ordered. The children were not made to feel their dependence by any particular dress : they were required to be neat and clean. By the assistance of clothing-clubs and other means, by the constant occupation given to the parents, and by the absence of intemperance, their wages

enabled them to dress respectably. They were taught to read well, to write a good hand, keep accounts, and well grounded in Scriptural and practical truth. Their duty to God and their neighbour was made really comprehensible. Mrs. Somerset felt that she had thus secured to them the power of gaining their living honestly, and that if any had superior talents, the improvement of them, and consequent elevation in the scale of society, was in their power. While none were made to feel themselves contemptible because of their poverty, but, on the contrary, self-respect was strongly inculcated, she left talents and merit to work their own way. If real, and equal to the supposition, they invariably bring their reward; but talent without industry or discretion is as a sword without a sheath; and the instilling high notions into the lower classes where there is neither power, talent, nor money, is a cruel and mistaken kindness. In Staunton village means of all sorts were given, events were left to God. The boys were taught trades, or put into farmers' houses; the girls were fitted to be useful servants, not vulgar fine ladies, but good wives and mothers, able to make their own clothes, cook their husbands' dinners, and make their shirts, instead of sitting with their hands before them to look genteel, dying of *ennui*,

and dreaming of sin¹. The duties of the Church were so zealously performed by Mr. Delville and his curate, and they were so universally beloved, that no dissenting meeting was to be seen at Staunton; while in the smaller village of Langdale there were two, and the church almost deserted. Twice during the week his people assembled in the evening, that being the time when the working classes can find time to attend, and he was rewarded by seeing himself surrounded by his parishioners, who knew that it might be said of their pastor, as was once said of another, that "his sermons were his text, and his life the sermon." The effect was visible. Instead of revelling in drunkenness at the alehouse, of which sinks of iniquity only one for necessary supplies existed, in Staunton the labourers came to church. By a judicious selection of books for lending, amusement was provided for the idle hours of the winter evening. In the summer every healthy and innocent recreation was encouraged, and by thus filling up the vacant mind, no space was left for ill weeds to grow:

" For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

¹ In one case known to the author, the ladies'-maids were obliged to take to embroidery and cross-stitch, to pass the time which they were too grand to give to their duties.

If, instead of providing so many receptacles for vice, more care were thus taken to prevent their necessity—if half the money given to charitable institutions were spent in increasing the means of employment, minds would be elevated, rather than depressed, as they are, by a sense of degradation as objects of charity. “The shilling earned gives far more pleasure than ten given ;” and the parent or sister supported by the industry of the son, brother, or sister, regards herself with far more happy feelings than the miserable inmate of the work-house. The charity may be less conspicuous, but is more in accordance with that inculcated by our Saviour. Little do we know how extensively it ranges, how the circles widen, how a good character which secures a good place is more than money. A dress made out as a first step to some young dressmaker, even at the risk of its being less well made, may perhaps be the means of support to a whole family, when a five-pound note would have only given temporary relief. There is more trouble in this method, and many would shrink from it. The condescending kindness which gives a guinea, the loss of which is not felt, is far easier. The look of a name printed in large letters in a list of subscriptions may be more gratifying to a proud mind ; but those who sacrifice time and thought with the desire of helping others to

help themselves, exhibit a much higher degree of benevolence.

The sick or afflicted were never forgotten at Staunton. Both Geraldine and Louisa passed many an hour in reading to the aged, comforting the sad, and ministering to the sick ; but they never felt justified in intruding at all times into the cottages of their dependents, merely because they were poor, or in requiring an account of the expenditure of money fairly their own.

We must now return from this long digression to Edith, whom we left lying on the bank at the departure of Mr. Delville and Louisa. For a time her mind seemed impressed with what Louisa had said ; and she read the little book, and acknowledged to herself that things which are disagreeable are rendered more or less so by the way in which we take them, and that, by a little effort on our part to soften others, many rough edges may be removed. She made many good resolutions, but she was without an acting principle, and consequently easily turned from her purpose. For a few days she endeavoured to follow Louisa's advice. Her manner was more gentle to her mother, more courteous to Mrs. Watson ; she devoted more of her time to books and work, and was more orderly in her dress and arrangements ; but finding that all her endeavours passed unobserved, she gradually relapsed into her old

habits, forgetting that in her duties the first object was the praise of God, and not of man. If this principle were more inculcated, how much oftener real characters would be seen! What "they say" is unfortunately of much greater importance than what the Bible says. It is the destruction of thousands. It would be well if the standard of truth were made our test; by that, and that alone, we shall be tried hereafter. If boys at school have not learned the grammar used, however they may fancy themselves instructed, they are found wanting in their examinations; and so it will be hereafter. It is the grammar of the Bible we must learn, not the grammar of the world. The one is the truth as it is in Jesus; the other a delusion, and a fearful one.

A few weeks after Louisa's conversation with Edith, Charles Cumberland met his sister on the stairs, and seizing her by the hand, dragged her into the library. He declared that she was moped to death, and proposed a plan for her amusement, which, he added, would drive nonsense out of her head. He then went on to tell her that a regiment was quartered at Winton, a town about five miles off, that there were capital good fellows in it, and that she should have some rides; moreover, that Mrs. Storeton, the colonel's wife, was to give a ball, and that it would be fine fun to have her there; indeed,

that he had promised to bring her under a feigned name. Edith at first was disposed to be shocked. An innate feeling of delicacy made her shrink from the plan; but the total absence of all confidence in her mother, and the pleasure of setting Mrs. Watson at defiance, gradually chased away her better feelings, and she consented. How often are young people thus led to ruin, and how many are lost for the sake of a joke, or what is falsely called a bit of fun. While Edith thought only of the pleasure of deceiving others, she was herself under "a delusion to believe a lie." The very men for whom she was thus sacrificing all delicacy of feeling would be the first to despise her, and to turn her into ridicule. The girls with whom men laugh and flirt are seldom chosen as wives; and while their own wives and daughters or sisters are carefully guarded, the former are encouraged for a momentary amusement to do what in their hearts they despise, and what they would rather die than see done by those they love. No men are so particular about their daughters as those who have been most irregular themselves. They know the world, and read it; and from having been accustomed to minds without delicacy or refinement, can scarcely imagine, much less understand, the natural feelings of propriety, which, when matured by a right feeling mother and education,

become too pure to understand the motives which influence others, or the manners and ideas of less delicate or cultivated minds. Edith rode well and gracefully, for in the art of riding her father had instructed her ; and in the happy days when he shared in his children's innocent pleasures, his delight had been to see her on her pony, and accompany her in her rides. Now he was driven from his cold and comfortless home, where, under the mask of religion, Lady Sophia, who believed herself sincere and was unconscious of her selfish indulgence, was led to give up reality and all domestic enjoyment for the opinions of persons whose interest it was to maintain them.

Charles Cumberland fixed the next day for the first ride. The habit was to be sent to the lodge, and the horse to wait outside the gate. It was sad to think that Edith could condescend to so degrading a proceeding, as inconsistent with the dignity of her character as wicked for its deception. It was a bright day, and with the uncomfortable feelings of all who in the slightest degree depart from integrity, she crept out through a back door, and found her maid, in whose power she was obliged to put herself, at the lodge. Even Mary felt the impropriety of the proceeding, and gently insinuated that Mr. Charles was not a safe guide for her. But Edith's spirit was up ; she could see no great

harm in the ride, and she was sure that it would do her good. Her brother had declared that the officers were gentlemen; if so, it was even worse, for what would they think? She stopped one minute before she passed the gate, half afraid to proceed; but Charles caught her by the arm, and dragged her forward. It is an old saying that "in doing right, it is the first step that costs;" but in doing wrong, it is the last. When the consequences are felt, we look back with bitter regret to the first dereliction from the path of duty. It is seldom that it is retrieved. The world is the severest of all judges. It stands by and laughs while the barque is hastening to destruction. It watches its movements, but stretches no hand to save; and when it sinks or is dashed upon a rock, stays not a minute to rescue the drowning crew. They are only condemned for their folly in trusting themselves to so frail a vessel. Edith was soon equipped and mounted, and she and her brother dashed gaily down the hill from the park gate, where they found a large party waiting for them. Fortunately for Edith, the colonel, who had once known her father, and who had some regard to her reputation, had persuaded his wife to accompany them, so that altogether she was better protected than could have been expected, and all passed off quietly. For several days the same plan was pursued,

and arrangements were made for the ball. This was more difficult, as Edith had no dress fit for the occasion, and her allowance had hitherto been a small one. Recourse was again had to falsehood; and under the pretence of ordering some books and music, she persuaded her father to give her ten pounds. During one of the rides, Mrs. Storeton took her to a mantua-maker in Winton, and passing her off for her niece, ordered her dress. She also showed her the figure of a quadrille at her lodgings; and though her movements were rather awkward, she hoped to pass tolerably in a crowd. The difficulty was, how to get out without detection. She was scarcely known at Winton, and had only been occasionally at the Abbey or Staunton Park, the inhabitants of which places or of the Rectory would certainly not be present, so that she had no fear of being recognized. Charles had no scruples, and it was agreed that advantage should be taken of an evening in which Lady Sophia was to attend a working-party at Mrs. Watson's, from which she always returned late, and never thought of inquiring for Edith. She was to dress at Mrs. Storeton's. One of the servants was to sit up for them; and as Charles often stayed out late, a slight noise would excite no suspicion. Colonel Cumberland had been absent for some weeks, and his return home likely to be at a distant period, and

Edward was too stupid to be feared. Edith passed the day in great trepidation, but the evening came at last; and as soon as Lady Sophia and her shadow, Mrs. Watson, were fairly out of sight, Charles came to her room, and they walked to a small gate leading out of the garden, where a carriage was waiting for them. They soon arrived at Winton. The ball was to be held in a large room at the only inn in the town. Edith, when dressed, looked very pretty and elegant, and, as the supposed niece of the colonel, received great attention. Still she was not happy. Conscience would be heard, and the fear of discovery oppressed her spirits. Apparently all passed off pleasantly. She and Mrs. Storeton parted with mutual professions of affection, while both in their hearts despised the other. As the elder and a married woman, Mrs. Storeton was more to blame. She ought to have been the last to have encouraged Charles in so disgraceful a frolic; but she was neither a religious nor a refined woman, and cared little for any thing but pleasure. All prospered according to the wishes of the party, till, on their arrival at home, they were horrified at finding their father had returned, and was waiting for them. Edith turned as pale as ashes, and trembled so violently, that she could not stand; while Charles, like all mean spirits, would have gladly slunk away, and left his sister to bear

all the reproach of her foolish and improper conduct. To this his father would not consent, and he ordered him to walk into the library, while he led Edith by the hand. Looking severely at Charles, he said, "Sir, a brother should be the protector of his sister ; her name should be sacred in his mouth ; but you have made her a by-word, an object of contempt and ridicule, where she should have been regarded as above being mentioned. Do not for a moment suppose that you have escaped detection ; for having looked into the ball-room when I was waiting for supper, and seen your sister dancing, I heard her called by another name, and spoken of as the colonel's niece. I therefore silently and sorrowfully withdrew, unwilling to betray her publicly, and was most unavoidably a party to a conversation among the officers, for whose amusement you had thus paraded Edith. It would be beneath me as a gentleman to repeat all the remarks on you both which I heard. It is enough for me to say that they were far from complimentary. I thank them so far that it has opened my eyes to the necessity of securing to you, sir, the education of a gentleman, and of controlling Edith's actions more than I have done hitherto."

Charles was much disposed to indulge in furious expressions against the officers, and declared that he would call them out.

“You must then,” replied his father, “call out half the regiment; for nearly the whole of them were assembled, and the conversation was so loud that it was impossible for me not to hear through the slight partition that intervened. Although I greatly blame Colonel Storeton for allowing his wife to take any part in the affair, I cannot but think that it will be more to your sister’s credit, not to have her brought before the public as the object of a duel, and to pass by in silence what I am not supposed to have heard. My return was accidental, in consequence of my friend’s being called away; and I only stopped at the inn for half an hour, thinking that I should not be at home in time for supper. I little expected to find my daughter out at such an hour, and in such company. You may both retire. To-morrow shall not pass without arrangements, which will I hope secure better conduct in future.”

Too glad to escape so easily, Charles marched off in a sulky manner; while Edith, burning with shame, slowly crept up stairs, and closing the door, threw herself on the bed in an agony of tears. The folly of her conduct presented itself in its true light. The degradation to which she had exposed herself, the shocking example she had given her young maid, the triumph to Mrs. Watson, like so many spectres, arrayed themselves before her. Then she re-

membered all Louisa had said ; compared her gentle and refined manners, and modest deportment, with those of the bold and vulgar women she had left ; and her heart died within her. In an agony of shame and distress she threw herself on her knees, and earnestly prayed for forgiveness and strength for the future. She arose comforted and calmed. She had turned to the true refuge, and had not been rejected. How much suffering would be avoided if we oftener thus confided our sin and sorrow to God, instead of running to our fellow-creatures !

Colonel Cumberland was what is called a respectable man of the world. He was consequently much more distressed at his daughter's conduct as an offence against society, than morality. If he could prevent the disagreeable consequences of the foolish affair, he cared little for the fault ; and most fortunately for this wish, the regiment was ordered abroad in a few days. As he had positively forbidden his son to mention his knowledge of what had past, the old butler and Mary having promised silence, he trusted that it might not become a subject of conversation. Edith in her rides, and at the ball, had passed for Mrs. Storeton's niece, on a visit to Langdale Park ; so that her being with Charles Cumberland had excited little surprise in the inferior set of a small county town like Winton, where less strictness in association and habits

would be observed than among persons of a different sphere. From Lady Sophia the whole business was studiously concealed. Mrs. Watson, although her piercing eyes discovered some secret, vainly endeavoured to penetrate it ; and Mary, whom she closely questioned, hated her too cordially to betray her young mistress.

It was however necessary to take some decisive step to remedy so much evil, and prevent the recurrence of such scenes ; and Colonel Cumberland boldly announced his determination of sending Edith to school for a year, and Charles to college. Lady Sophia was at first very angry, and many consultations took place between her and her confidante on the subject ; but finding resistance vain, consent was forced, rather than given ; and it was decided that Edith should be sent to a fashionable school at Brighton, under certain restrictions. She was to learn to dance steps, but not figures ; a minuet, but on no account a quadrille. The ridicule such an absurd order brought upon her was immense, for how was it possible that common sense could see the difference between a slow or a quick motion, more especially as in Eastern countries the dances considered so objectionable are all of the slow kind.

A sharp, pert girl at the school, whenever she met Edith, raised her fingers before her, first slow and then quick, asking her which she

thought most correct. She was on no account to wear more than two flounces, and they were to be narrow, as Mrs. Watson pronounced three wide ones inconsistent. On the evening when the parents of the girls came to see them dance, Edith was to go to bed. On the Sunday she was to attend a particular church, as there was only one out of twelve or fourteen where truth was preached. One was a Puseyite, another only fit for lawyers and fashionable people, and another might do as a stepping-stone¹. Edith felt deeply the absurdity of such regulations; but the lady under whose care she was placed was a sensible woman; and she so strongly represented to Colonel Cumberland their evil consequences, that he interfered; and Mrs. Jervis was allowed to follow her own judicious arrangements. With her every thing was to be done on principle. Display, or the desire to surpass others, formed no part of her system. The duty of obedience was strongly inculcated. The desire to do right, and not emulation, was her standard. Talents were considered as a gift of God, to be improved for his glory, and not for the admiration of our fellow-creatures. Accomplishments were taught as the mental luxury of the rich; as the occupation which

¹ Ridiculous as these restrictions may appear, the relation is a fact; and the mischief done to the ignorant by such to the real cause is incalculable.

takes the place of manual labour among the poor, when more important duties are not called out. Dancing was regarded as an innocent and healthy amusement, suitable to youthful spirits, a means of giving grace to the carriage, and an additional charm to conversation, by the attraction of manner. Many a word of admonition or instruction will be received from one of pleasing manner and expression, which would be carelessly passed by, but for the opportunity thus afforded. If older persons remembered our Saviour's prayer for his disciples,—“And now *I* am no more in the world, but *these* are in the world, I pray not that thou shouldest take them *out* of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,”—the young would not be driven from religion as they are. His example would make it as lovely to them, as it is now often hateful. To the old and afflicted the world appears in its true colours, but the young and gay cannot see it with the same eyes. If they were therefore more guided than driven, we should soon see them cease to take pleasure in that which pleases for a while, but in a very short time to a cultivated mind or an affectionate heart becomes weariness. It has been wisely and well said, that the education of life perfects “the thinking mind, and only degrades the frivolous.” Seeing is believing. The character of our Saviour is

beautifully drawn by Bishop Patrick ; and as the object of this story is to do good, rather than to amuse for an hour, the good bishop shall speak for himself. “And first, I must set this Jesus before your eyes as one that was dead to these outward things, while He lived among them ; and that withdrew his heart from the world, while He conversed with it. He was not a person cloistered and retired from the society of men ; He led not an anchorite’s life, which obliged Him to shun their company ; nor did He put on a sullen gravity that should affright men from his fellowship ; but He used the greatest freedom, and treated men with such familiarity, that He invited them into it. He did eat and drink as other men do ; He refused not their invitations, when they were desirous to entertain Him ; and even at a marriage He denied not to be a guest, when his presence was welcome to them. He walked into cities and towns, but kept Himself still as unspotted from the world, as He were in a wilderness. He lived in the thickest of its temptations, but none of them could fasten or stick upon Him. He lived in the sense of the spiritual world, while He was a man of this ; and encompassed about with our infirmities. He was a stranger to all the evil manners and customs of men, while He was familiar with themselves ; and He testified against their wicked deeds while He kept them company ;

nay, He purified many by his example, remaining uncorrupted by any of theirs. And truly such a life it is we should lead. This I would have you to think is the more perfect life, and more like to our Saviour's, and therefore aspire to it : and stay not in solitude any longer than to fit you and prepare yourself for this. And tell me, I beseech you, do you not think it possible for a man to leave his heart in the world, when his legs and arms are out of it ? May it not dwell in his fancy when he sees it not with his eyes. May he not please himself in the shadow and image of his old friend, which he says is dead and buried. May not one leave his soul behind, when he withdraws his body from all the world ? I wish there be not many of such religious men and women ; as, on the contrary, I hope there be not a few whose minds and hearts are shut up from the world, though they are with it every day ; who have made a cloister for their souls, while their bodies are at liberty ; who bridle their appetites, and lay restraints on their desires, though they live at large. Consider, therefore, how ridiculous it is to imitate another sort of men, who, hearing us, speak of forsaking the world, and renouncing all its pomps and vanities ; imagine that they should throw away their rich garments, forbear the civility of a compliment, or so much as a salutation, with abundance of such follies.

What have these things done that we should revenge ourselves upon them? What is their guilt that we should be so severe and fierce upon them? No, we must turn the blow another way. We must cut off our affections from these worldly enjoyments; we must walk in the flesh, but not after it. We may feel its desires, but not follow them. We must labour to become poor in the midst of abundance, to be humble in high places; to be temperate amongst the baits of pleasure. To use those things well which custom has abused; to think of ourselves in fine clothes, just as we did before they came on our backs; and, in a few words, to withdraw ourselves from all the inveiglements of the world, not in the common way of removing our persons, but by removing it from our esteem and affections. I cannot see by what merit the seclude do assume to themselves the title of religion more than others; seeing that they give a far greater proof of their virtue who are in the world, and the world not in them, than those in whom indeed the world is not, but they also are not in the world. It is more glorious to beat an enemy than to fly from him; and it requires a greater spirit to maintain a breach, than to hold out within the walls¹."

This is the true spirit of the Gospel; but the

¹ "The Parable of the Pilgrim," by Bishop Patrick.

standard is so high, that few can attain unto it ; and yet “ he who aimeth at the sky, has more chance of hitting the bush than he that aims below it.”

We bring down our Saviour to our comprehension ; and because we cannot and will not try to walk as He walked, make Him as one of ourselves. How much more beautiful is that holiness, which, like the sun, shines on the evil and on the good ; and while imparting life and warmth to all, loses none of its own.

CHAPTER V.

Great were the preparations in the Abbey for Catherine's wedding. Nothing was thought or talked of but settlements and the dowry. Her sole object was to make herself as independent as possible. Besides her own twenty thousand pounds, and a jointure of six thousand a year, she secured another thousand for her pin-money, a house in London, and a small but beautiful estate in the country. Her dowry was magnificent, her presents few. She had money enough to purchase the meane but none whose love provided the richer. Flattering from a few of her relations, who felt themselves bound to show her some testimony of regard, she saw herself surrounded with numbered magnificence, and as the marble monument where no hand brings flowers to shed their lustre upon it; no heart beats in unison with hers; one heart alone responded to her vanity, and that was her mother's. Her father knew her too well, not to feel what remonstrance

would be vain. All that she valued would be hers. She might have parts, but had no understanding ; and she was more gratified by the stupid astonishment, and weak admiration of persons wholly indifferent to her, than with all that heart and head would give. She lived for externals, of the life within she knew nothing ; so that it was useless to represent what she could not understand. Lord Cornbury was in a constant state of merriment. Losing all sense of propriety, or of the fearful sacrifice of happiness his sister was about to make to the shrine of vanity, he indulged himself in the most inexcusable expressions of ridicule. Lord Davenport was remarkable for his sallow complexion and small stature. He scarcely reached Catherine's shoulder when he walked by her side ; while she seemed desirous to make the inequality more conspicuous, by drawing herself up to her full height. Lord Cornbury would appear at the breakfast-table with a faded lily and a full-blown rose in the button-hole of his coat. He harnessed a pony with a large horse in his phaeton, under pretence of breaking him in, and occasionally asked his sister if she were not afraid of stepping over Lord Davenport. Catherine generally treated his remarks with silent contempt, in which she was fully justified, as her brother was inexcusable in the expression of such feelings, now that the mar-

riage was settled. Sometimes she would retort upon him ; and as he was particularly amiable in his manners with all who approached him, observed with a supercilious smile, " I expect, Cornbury, with your noble ideas, that I shall see you marry the steward's daughter, and Matilda walking off with a country curate ;— I cannot stoop to such creatures."

" Well, Catherine, when we do, our first visit shall be to Davenport Castle. I shall come in a buggy ; and as to Matilda, a pillion behind her husband will suit her best."

Catherine drew up her short upper lip, snuffed the air with her expanded nostrils, and with a dignified look retired to console herself, not with Lord Davenport, but with her maid. The contemplation of wedding dresses, jewels, and the delightful thought of soon being her own mistress, quickly drove away all recollection of her brother's raillery. As to her future husband, she never for a moment dreamed of his being otherwise than an attendant when needed, or her humble slave at other times. Matilda, Geraldine Somerset, Louisa Delville, and Edith Cumberland were to be her bridesmaids. She thought it rather condescending to ask Louisa, but the hope of astonishing her with her magnificence, reconciled her to the idea. Lord Davenport's two sisters were to complete the number. Catherine knew little

of Louisa's real feeling. Of envy she was incapable; and when she compared her high-minded, holy, and intellectual father with the silly Lord Davenport, and her gentle and refined mother with the proud and ignorant Lady Rockingham, she thought of her humble home with rapture, and would not have exchanged it for all that rank and riches could have given, unless accompanied by higher endowments. There was a simple air of elegance and refinement surrounding it, which mind alone can give; and though this is generally visible in the mansions of the great, it was not to be found at the Abbey, where the presiding genius was so unsuitable, excepting in Matilda's private apartment, where the same spirit prevailed.

The eventful day at length arrived. It was a lovely May morning; all nature seemed rejoicing, while art shared in her sunshine, but not in her grace. There was little of nature in Catherine, but Matilda's tears flowed freely. In her it had formed the heart, which grace had perfected; while art, which forms the surface, and is exercised but for the eyes of men, was all that her sister possessed. Guests arrived. The children of the village school, all newly arrayed for the occasion, strewed flowers on the churchyard path. Carriages-and-four rolled gaily along. A bishop performed the

ceremony, for how could any less dignified churchman marry Lady Catherine Mertoun. The bride, dressed in all the splendour of white satin and lace, entered the church, leaning on her father's arm. The bridesmaids, in white, followed, and a long procession of grandeur and indifference brought up the rear. While many eyes rested on Catherine's majestic figure for a minute, they turned with a feeling of repose upon the gentle Matilda, the graceful and intellectual Geraldine, the modest and elegant Louisa, and the quiet and unpretending Edith. The Ladies Granby, Lord Davenport's sisters, were mere fashionable fine ladies, with nothing to interest or recommend them but their dress. The villagers had no sympathy with them; but Matilda had too often visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, not to be an object of love and prayer. There was no child in the school who had not felt the influence of her kindness and instruction. Geraldine, who in her visits to the Abbey had always shared in her works of love, was with herself regarded with the most devoted affection. The ceremony proceeded, but where was the prayer that flows from the heart? How could the blessing of God rest upon such a union? No! The world might smile and envy, the newspaper spread far and wide the gorgeous array; but the sacrifice to the shrine of wealth and gold,

where no affection or respect cements the bond, is not registered in heaven. All was over. Marriages, christenings, executions, and funerals are soon over. The crowd disperses, and the actors and sufferers are forgotten. The bride may have been made miserable or happy for life ; the criminal, for we dare not limit God's mercy, saved or lost ; and the dead departed from the mourner for ever, and yet the world goes on as before. The crowd disperses, and our fellow-creatures in life or death are as nothing to it. How much oftener might the mourners return from the funeral with smiles, than the bridal party. The one has entered into rest, if death has been met in the Christian's hope ; but the other is too frequently the beginning of sorrow, and often ends in an unblest death.

A splendid *déjeûner* awaited the party at the Abbey. The park resounded with rejoicing. Sounds of merriment by no means the effect of natural, but consequent upon the excitement of ardent spirits, disturbed the peace of the village. Lord and Lady Davenport drove off, as is usual, in a chariot-and-four, in the midst of shouts and acclamations. Matilda and her sister bridesmaids regarded her with kindness and compassion. The Ladies Granby thought too much of themselves to care for others, and were engaged in flirting, hoping that their turn

might be the next. Edith was sad, and when the bride was fairly off, retired with Matilda to her quiet room to weep and to moralize.

“ We barter life for pottage ; sell true bliss
For wealth, for pleasure, or renown.
Thus, Esau like, our father’s blessing miss.
Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown.”

The reception of the noble Marquis and Marchioness at Davenport Castle, was such as might be expected. Bonfires, feasting, games of all kinds abounded. The bells rang merrily, those bells which ring for all things,—

“ One moment for cradle, another for grave.
As toll’d they can laugh or weep.”

The evening closed amidst the sounds of revelry and mirth. Two hands had been united in the morning. Two heads had ratified the treaty. Hearts had never existed. Nor were there any beating hearts at Davenport. There was no relation between landlord and tenant, no widow’s blessing or prayers, no thanks from the poor, no child’s love. No such feelings had taken root. All was cold solemn grandeur. Always from home, Lord Davenport’s tenants paid their rents, not like the drops to return in refreshing showers on themselves, but to go to the race-course, the gambling-table, and the opera-dancer ; encouraging the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment, and forsaking all those pure and holy enjoyments which—

“Like the dew-drops in glory reset,
'Mid the jewels of heaven are glittering yet.
Then are we not taught by each beautiful ray,
To mourn not earth's fair things, tho' passing away.
For tho' youth of its beauty and brightness be riven,
All that withers on earth, blooms more sweetly in heaven.”

Like all weak people, Lord Davenport was the victim of the cunning of others, and his own vanity. From the fear of being thought careful of his money, he threw it away on worthless things and still more worthless people, who flattered and toadied him. None are so mean as the extravagant. They have plenty to throw away and nothing to give. What is in the world called a fine generous spirit, is in fact nothing more than recklessness and selfishness. The man who gives what belongs to his tradespeople and servants, is little better than a thief. While he lavishes thousands on his pleasures, he leaves honest people to starve. “He that giveth to the poor, lendeth unto the Lord ; and look, whatsoever he layeth out shall be paid him again ;” but “he that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want.” What is it but oppressing the poor, to leave just debts unpaid, while we are entertaining the rich at the expense of others. The poor man is laughed at for his folly, and the rich and great for some other reason. The world would go to neither, but for its own amusement. As regards the poor, the fear of hurting the feel-

ings of others will sometimes influence a delicate mind, while the lovers of good eating will go any where for the sake of a dinner, or rather than stay at home alone; but the moment that misfortune shuts the door of hospitality, the loss of self-gratification shuts the door of desire, which is turned to the next open house, with a total forgetfulness of the nominal friend, who has believed himself the object of regard. Then it is that real and false profession appears. The Christian hastens to the deserted hall of pleasure, to the sick or sorrowing, in whose prosperous hours he has borne a part; while the miserable worldly mind shrinks from contact with what brings reality before him, and buries the past obligation in oblivion. And yet for such all real comfort and happiness is too often sacrificed. But to return to Lady Davenport. For a few days she found amusement in putting her house in order, and in contemplating her grandeur and magnificence; but this soon led to the desire of exhibition, and she longed to show herself as mistress of the Castle. She had no interest in the beautiful scenery around her, no companionship in her husband; and occasionally, even the Marchioness of Davenport and sixty thousand a year could feel ennui, and long for the gentle Matilda as a patient listener. After a fortnight had passed her solitude became insupportable, and the constant contemplation of the very disagreeable hus-

band to whom she had consigned herself, probably for life, became hateful to her. As is generally the case with weak people, he was very obstinate, and from having been trained with the highest sense of his own importance, was far from unconscious of the advantages he had conferred. It was only by attacking his vanity that she persuaded him to open his house. Invitations were sent to all the neighbours in turn; and the desire manifested to see the bride, of whom report as usual spread most exaggerated accounts, was great. Her first step gave much dissatisfaction, for instead of managing a meeting between the less important families and the greater, which without in the least detracting from the great, gives much pleasure to those in a less exalted position, who like to see what they hear of, she invariably invited them to meet each other. This was no amusement; and many felt that if at Davenport Castle they only saw their immediate neighbours, with whom they lived in daily intimacy, it was not worth the trouble of going many miles to do what could have been more easily accomplished at home: added to which they could enjoy themselves much more at a distance from the contemptuous and patronising Lady Davenport. Those who live within the fences of their own dignity and position, little know how much attentions are valued by those beneath them. Far from lessening

respect and esteem, it gains freely what is otherwise withheld altogether, or given grudgingly. In all well-regulated minds, the deference to exalted station is a fixed principle, supported by custom and taught by Scripture. In this there is no sacrifice of independence, and it is only the proud who refuse it. The proud and self-sufficient begin by desiring the notice of the rich and great, which when withheld changes their wish into the contrary one, of dragging them down to their own level. None are so tyrannical as the advocates of equality. They expect the greatest deference from those below them, while they give none to those above them; and the very persons who rail against the man of rank one day, are the first to bend the lowest, if a smile or any degree of attention is given afterwards. It is only the vulgar who presume upon kindness, or condescend to be patronised. The really refined never give pain, and by at once making those in a less elevated position in good humour with themselves, place them at ease. This was no part of Lady Davenport's system. She would generally secure to herself an agreeable neighbour from her own set, with whom she kept up a whispered conversation, while her unfortunate guests were left to feel themselves asked as a duty and regarded as an incumbrance. Lord Davenport was too silly to think of any thing but his magnificent plate

and *recherché* dinner. As might be supposed, each day lessened any feeling of interest, and by degrees, all but her own set ceased to accept the invitations, much to their own satisfaction, and rather to the opposite feeling in Lady Davenport, who, though she was totally indifferent to her guests, liked to exhibit herself, and found it difficult to secure that object.

After a few months had passed away, she expressed her wish to visit her parents, not from any affectionate yearnings, but from the same desire of exhibition. With the exception of her mother, no particular gratification was received in the announcement of her intended visit to the Abbey. Lord Rockingham and her brother dreaded Lord Davenport; and Matilda felt more and more the total uncongeniality between herself and her sister, though she neither expressed it to others, or allowed Lady Davenport to perceive it. Lord Cornbury's love of fun would have led to much absurdity in the reception, if it had been permitted; but Matilda impressed upon him, that what was allowable before marriage was unjustifiable afterwards, that it would be dangerous to assist in unveiling Catherine's eyes, and that jokes, however innocent in themselves, should never be indulged in at the expense of another. It is not the merry-hearted or thoughtless speaker who does the mischief, but the uncharitable hearer; and thus many a friendship has been destroyed,

by a word or action which was only said in fun. We should be sure of our company before we venture on dangerous ground. It was late in the day when Lord and Lady Davenport arrived at the Abbey. Matilda hastened to welcome her sister, who, coldly expressing her surprise that she should thus rush to the door, touched her lips and passed on. Lord Cornbury could not restrain himself from giving a profound bow, and gracefully raising her hand, touched it with his lips. Lord Davenport, who had been almost extinguished by the height of his wife and the breadth of her skirts, at length emerged, looking smaller and more insignificant than ever. Lady Rockingham was soon made sensible that her influence was over, while her good and kind father welcomed his daughter with sadness and affection. After she had thrown herself affectedly into a *bergère*, the folds of her gown gracefully arranged, the shawl negligently falling off her shoulders, and the pocket handkerchief held exactly in the proper position, her delicate feet encased in velvet slippers, lined with fur, she cast her eyes around and observed, that she had no idea that the furniture was so old-fashioned.

“I wonder, mamma, how you can bear such antediluvian furniture: I wish you could see how beautiful the drawing-room is at Davenport; and my boudoir, oh, it is lovely!”

"Perhaps," answered Lord Cornbury, "you have more time to look at it than we have ; as for me, I seldom have a moment unoccupied, and when I come into the house it always looks very cheerful and comfortable, particularly when Matilda is in it."

"Oh, I dare say that you can find pleasure in such dull association ; I like to look like other people. Your ideas never seem to me to grow, you only vegetate."

"No, dear sister ; we grow, and you run to seed. One comfort is, that we have tried our old friends, while yours are new. Perhaps when your chairs and tables are old they may not look so well. The finest things or the finest friends are not always the best."

"Oh, I shall never let mine come to that test, for as soon as they cease to please me I shall change them."

"And pray, dear Catherine, may I ask, if you intend to do the same with your friends?"

"Why, I dare say that I shall. If people do not conduce to our amusement, I can see no use in them."

"Nor no use perhaps in sacrificing an hour to give pleasure to those from whom we have often received it, without making any return."

"Oh, Catherine," said Matilda, "you little know the happiness of giving pleasure. It is far beyond that of receiving it. The feelings

of the unpleasing are frequently more susceptible than those of the fascinating and lovely. One values a kind word or a kind thought more than the other would the attentions of a crowd. While one half-hour is given up at little cost to ourselves, to please another, we perhaps secure a friend for life, and at some future period may find that it was not thrown away."

"How long is it since Matilda has turned preacher? I suppose that she is preparing to assist in the duties of the curate, whose house she intends to honour with her presence." And asking what time they dined, and whether they were to be alone, Lady Davenport requested to be lighted to her rooms, and casting a look of contemptuous pity on Matilda, left her family to feel that they had lost all place in her affections, the first-fruit of her interested marriage.

Upon reaching her apartments she threw herself on a couch, and calling her maid, consulted her as to the most becoming dress, considerably disappointed to find that no addition to the family party was expected. To a person with no mind, the idea of a quiet evening is dreadful, while to the cultivated and affectionate it brings a feeling of refreshment and happiness. Those who are always in society have no time for thought. The mind becomes vacant, the conversation frivolous, resting solely on the events

of the day, generally scandalous. "What the ear and eye receive, the tongue so rapidly extends, that nothing is digested." "It is not pleasure which corrupts us, but we who corrupt pleasure. Pleasure is in itself good. It is the seasoning which God the All-wise gives to useful things and needful acts, in order that we may seek them." It is only in the abuse of it that we make it sinful, and "If good people would but make goodness agreeable, and smile instead of frowning in their virtue, how many would they win to the good cause¹."

Lady Rockingham was already beginning to feel the difference between Matilda and the cold and heartless Catherine. Matilda was ever ready to walk with her, to drive her little pony-carriage, and assist in all the smaller offices of love, which are so endearing. "It is in the minute circumstances of life, that the real character is displayed: in these we are under the influence of our natural disposition, and act from ourselves; while, in the more open and important actions, we may be drawn by public opinion, and many other external motives, from that bias which our disposition would have taken. Who can tell the value of a smile? It costs the giver nothing, but is beyond price to the sad or forsaken. It disarms malice, subdues temper, turns hatred to love, revenge to kindness, and paves the darkest paths with gems of

¹ Archbishop Usher.

sunlight. A smile on the brow betrays a kind heart; a pleasant friend and affectionate brother; a dutiful son and a happy husband. It adds a charm to beauty; it decorates the face of the deformed, and makes beauty more than beauty." This was the charm of Matilda. She was the sunshine of all around her. Her father, whose health had been declining for some time, found in her at all times the pen of a ready writer, the quick eye of affection, and the pleasant and cheerful reader. She had also been the means of much good to her brother, whose naturally lively disposition might otherwise have led him into many indiscretions. By being ever ready to share in his amusements when consistent with feminine propriety, by using her varied accomplishments so as to cheer his evenings, by guiding his choice of books, so as to combine entertainment without immorality, and instruction without dryness, she led him from vicious pursuits. Lord Cornbury was never seen looking like a jockey or puffing smoke in a lady's face, swaggering along with his hands in his pockets, and rivalling stablemen in slang and vulgar expressions. To his father his manner was always deferential; and it never entered into his mind to wish "the old gentleman in his coffin," or think it time for the "governor" to walk off the course¹.

¹ Such expressions may seem almost incredible, but are not imaginations of the author.

He was too thankful to profit by so noble an example, and glad to keep him, sensible that he was as yet too inexperienced to fulfil the duties and responsibilities which would devolve upon him. "It is the most beautiful object the eyes of man can behold, to see a man of worth and his son live in entire unreserved correspondence. The mutual kindness and affection between them, give an inexpressible satisfaction to all who know them. It is a sublime pleasure, which increases by participation. It is sacred as friendship, as pleasurable as love, and as joyful as religion. This state of mind does not only dissipate sorrow, which would be extreme without it, but enlarges pleasure which would otherwise be contemptible. The most indifferent thing has its force and beauty, when it is spoken by a kind father, and an insignificant thing has its weight when offered by a dutiful child. I know not how to express it, but I think I may call it 'a transplanted self-love.' All the enjoyment and sufferings a man meets with, are regarded only as they concern him in the relation he has to another. A man's very honour receives new value to him, when he thinks that when he is in his grave, it will be had in remembrance, that such an action was done by such a one's father. Such considerations sweeten the old man's evening, and his soliloquy delights him, when he can say to him-

self, 'No man can tell my child, his father was either unmerciful or unjust. My son shall meet many a man who shall say to him, I was obliged to thy father; and be my child a friend to his child for ever.' It is not in the power of all men to leave illustrious names or great fortunes to their posterity, but they can very much conduce to their having industry, probity, valour, and justice. It is in every man's power to leave his son the honour of descending from a virtuous man, and add the blessings of heaven to whatever he leaves him¹."

We left Lady Davenport meditating upon her evening dress; but had she no other reflections? Those who could have read her heart, would have seen a small cloud already rising above the horizon. The seed of disappointment was sown. She could not fail to perceive that she was not altogether so much envied or admired as she expected, that her husband was an object of contempt and ridicule, and that, like the water in the Curse of Kehama, affection and ease receded on her approach, leaving coldness and formality in its place. Matilda's elevated mind and sentiments were totally incomprehensible to her, and her simple and wholesome amusements and occupations insipid. Without spectators she was miserable: her father she thought ill and dull, her mother old and twad-

¹ Steele.

dling: her brother, though restrained by Matilda, still showed plainly how much he pitied her; of all things the most galling to a proud spirit, and ungrateful to all. Sympathy cheers and comforts, while pity humbles; but there is a great gulf between the two. If Lady Davenport could have aroused any lively feeling of envy or admiration, it would have satisfied her, but at home there was nothing to excite it. All were her equals. Accustomed from birth to rank and riches, they attached none of the vulgar ideas to them which little minds do; and her mother's admiration, proceeding as it did from having been grafted and not indigenous, gave her no pleasure. Her maid comforted her by assuring her, that when she went to London she would be properly appreciated; but that at the Abbey, Madam Somerset's stupid nonsense had dummified the whole house. "Why, milady, Lady Matilda was quite a different lady till that tiresome woman put all her new-fangled notions into her head, and after all, I believe, that at heart she thinks quite as much of all these fine things as any of us. Why, how handsomely she dresses, and how elegant her house is, and her carriage, and I am sure, between ourselves, milady, she has an eye to Lord Cornbury."

Just as she uttered these words, Matilda opened the door, and hearing the last sentence,

could scarcely repress her surprise at her impertinence, or her astonishment that her proud sister should allow her maid to talk so familiarly with her. Nobody could be more kind or considerate to her maid than Matilda, or more truly her friend, but instead of allowing her to talk of persons or dress, she contrived to give a pleasant and useful turn to her conversation. By relating interesting anecdotes, or repeating, in a cheerful way, some of the improving remarks she read; by taking a kind interest in her family affairs, and encouraging her in being careful with her money and dressing suitably to her station, so as to be a respectable servant and not a vulgar lady, she gained an influence over her for good. Without making her feel as an inferior, she secured that respect which is only given from the heart. Lady Davenport's smart and conceited fine lady, who condescended to accept wages and perform the part of a maid, was hated by all in her own station of life, and ridiculed by those above her.

Upon the entrance of Matilda, Mrs. Perkins bounced out of the room, slamming the door after her, and muttering to herself, "What stupid people those methodists are."

Lady Davenport turned towards her sister, and with a supercilious smile, asked how long Mrs. Somerset had been trying to catch Cornbury?

“Dear Catherine, how can you allow your maid to put such ideas into your head ; I do not believe that Mrs. Somerset has ever thought of such a thing. I am quite sure that she would never condescend to catch any body.”

“Oh, you need not flatter yourself,” replied Catherine ; “those quiet methodistical people are just as bad as others, only they do it in a different way. Now there is your friend, Lady Vavasour, with her snug little tea-parties, to which none but elder sons are invited.”

“That is not Mrs. Somerset’s way. I have often heard her say, that while she should consider it wrong to shut out Geraldine from society, she ever felt that art seldom succeeded ; that when it did, it might make a marriage, but not a happy one ; and that the man who has been duped as a lover will be apt to fancy himself duped as a husband.”

“Oh, Matilda, that is only to blind your eyes ! Mrs. Somerset is sharp-witted enough, with all her affected goodness, to take advantage of your simplicity.”

“No, Catherine, this is the worst part of the world, that it never can suppose a pure motive, but puts its own bad thoughts and feelings into the hearts of others. Mrs. Somerset’s whole conduct shows what she is, and no envy or malice can injure her. Where do you see a more perfect girl than Geraldine, or a more really

amiable youth than Ernest? Her servants have been with her since she married; and as to all her dependents and tenants, they adore her. Oh, dear Catherine, why should 'we hate the excellence we cannot imitate?' Why should we try to injure one who never injures us? Who ever hears Mrs. Somerset say one unkind word?"

"Oh, I have often heard her talk of Lady Sophia Cumberland's faults, and Edith's defects, and the vulgarity of the sons!"

"So have I, but not with envy or uncharitableness. The want of discrimination in character is weakness. She has talked with us upon the subject with regret that so much real good should have been obscured by early neglect, left to waste in the atmosphere of the world, in its worst shape, and now extinguished by the art of an interested and vulgar woman like Mrs. Watson. I have heard Mrs. Somerset speak with deep sorrow of Lady Sophia, but never with unkindness. It pains me to see religion, which is so beautiful in itself, disfigured, and its cause injured, by notions and opinions which have no part in it."

"Oh, I am sure that she is very charming, but I know that in London she only excites ridicule with her extreme particularity in some things. The worldly people say, that she only keeps Geraldine from public places, and will not let her polk and valse, just to make her more

remarked, and then your good ones are all furious because she goes to balls."

"So it has ever been," replied Matilda. "In the world it is not what is right or wrong, but do you do as I do? and if you do not, you are good for nothing. It was the same in our Saviour's days; John the Baptist was called mad for leading a solitary life, and our Saviour a drunkard and a wine-bibber because He mixed more generally. Lady Sophia is blamed for shutting up Edith, while Mrs. Somerset is equally blamed for allowing Geraldine to go into society. I cannot but think that we should leave our neighbours alone, and win more by 'the spirit we are of,' than drive away people, who are, perhaps, in God's eyes much better than ourselves, by severity and ill nature: while Lady Sophia's ill-judged separation, not from sin, but from people, makes every body around her uncomfortable, and brings discredit upon her profession, Mrs. Somerset's truly Christian spirit in all societies, and engaging manner, have been the means of happiness to numbers; to none more than myself. I often wish, Catherine, that you knew her better."

"Oh, Matilda! you really plague me to death with that tiresome Mrs. Somerset; and, what is worse, papa and Cornbury are grown just as stupid as yourself, and even mamma seems to care less for the world than she did."

“And how happy it is that it should be so. I only wish that it were really so. What does the world care for old people: excepting as a protection to the young they are only regarded as useless incumbrances,—wall-flowers, as I have heard old ladies contemptuously called: while what can be more beautiful than a respectable old age, surrounded by the love of children and grandchildren—‘the victory fought, the battle won’—quietly waiting their summons. Oh, it is a beautiful sight!”

“Well, Matilda, I cannot go into raptures over these old wrinkled bodies: I think the young ones much better worth looking at. Now, do not you even think that I am a more pleasant contemplation than old Lady Davenport?”

“Oh, Catherine, you surely do not call hers a respectable old age; why, she is an awful sight. Whenever I meet her, at seventy-five rouged up to the eyes, her ringlets flowing over her withered cheeks, dressed like a girl, and talking like a child, it makes my heart ache. How different Mrs. Delville’s mother is, with her silvery grey hair, her plain black silk gown, her gentle and kind manner surrounded by love and respect; all her work done and herself at peace with God and man, and then say if old age is not respectable.”

“Oh, those dreadful Delvilles, I am even

more tired of them than of the Somersets! I declare that I hate them from never hearing any thing but good of them. I never go any where without having Delvilles and Somersets dinned into my ears. However, it reminds me that I must call upon them."

And Lady Davenport comforted herself with the idea that there was somebody to whom she could display her finery. With such component parts a family *soirée* could have little charm; for it was as impossible for Catherine to appreciate the minds and feelings of her family, as it was for them to sympathize with hers. Lady Rockingham was too insignificant a personage to excite even the vanity of her daughter; so, while Matilda and her brother devoted themselves to their father's amusement by reading and music, and Lord Davenport snored after the dinner which he had been rejoicing over, discussing its merits and defects, and gloating over its delicacies, Lady Davenport took up a "Tale of Fashionable Life," upon which her eyes rested, while her mind wandered upon her own future action in similar scenes, and Lady Rockingham sat with her arms folded and her eyes fixed on vacancy, wishing that her youth could be restored.

The next morning Catherine ordered her britscha-and-four, to pay her visits, accompanied by two outriders. She had made a point of

bringing her own horses, although her father's stables were full, as she would on no account have lost the opportunity of exhibiting her superior coronet on the harness, or her lighter or more fashionable equipage. Her toilette was elaborate; and when she made her appearance, Lord Cornbury stood in amaze, and asked her whether she was going to court. To this she deigned no reply. Matilda, who was to accompany her, was dressed with the simple elegance which good taste directs; and although she said nothing, she was vexed at the want of tact and the love of display which guided her sister's actions. Accustomed as she had been all her life to the attributes of station, she scarcely appreciated them. The absence of them might have been felt, but not the possession. Of the vulgar pride which courts astonishment and envy, she knew nothing. Self-respect was natural to her; and while all loved her, none denied her the consideration which was her due.

The first visit was to be at Staunton, where they found Mrs. Somerset, as usual, engaged in cheerful occupation with Geraldine. It was their custom to read much together, and their mornings were always devoted to improvement. By thus keeping part of each day employed, their minds were stored with information and new ideas. They had subjects of conversation without detraction and scandal. It was never

necessary with them to destroy the characters of acquaintance, or deteriorate from the value of friendship, merely for something to say. No false reports, ill-natured surmises or inuendoes, emanated from Staunton. Without appearing to do so, Mrs. Somerset had the happy art so few possess, of giving a turn to conversation, so as to introduce useful subjects, and raise its tone. While all phraseology or religious discussion were avoided, a spirit of love and refinement prevailed, which insensibly attracted and pleased. What was in her heart was diffused through all her words and actions; "discreetly witty, and gaily wise," her humour and her fun were never at the expense of others. None of her visitors were gratified by witty descriptions of the mistakes or want of manner, or accidentally ridiculous or thoughtless actions of friends or acquaintance for whom she professed regard. Although none could be more sensible of defects, she was equally careful to conceal them. How many friendships are destroyed by the ill-natured repetition of an innocent joke. A cheerful, kind heart thoughtlessly allows itself some simple remark upon a friend, which, if heard as it was said, would have produced no unkind feeling, but repeated with malice and a peculiar emphasis, perhaps only on one word, makes the whole appear in a different light. Who has not in a moment of anger or vexation said

what has been afterwards deeply regretted, and which, but for some malicious repetition or interpretation, would have been unheeded? How often are false conclusions made from outward circumstances, which, if the real causes were known, would perhaps gain approbation rather than condemnation. There is nothing more certain, than that half the world is as unjustly praised as dispraised; and that many of the actions which men have applauded, have been rendered by the motive hateful in God's sight, while others which have been despised or condemned may have been ennobled for the same reason.

The arrival of Lady Davenport's splendid equipage excited neither surprise nor remark at Staunton, and she was not a little disappointed at the simple and affectionate manner of her reception. From her childhood she had been Geraldine's companion; her marriage had not altered the intrinsic value of either. Ernest Somerset, who was now seventeen, gratified her vanity by a silent gaze of amazement, which she mistook for admiration. She would have been mortified had she known how painful was the contrast in his mind between his own sweet sister and Matilda, and the arrogant beauty before him. Lady Davenport was herself subdued by the ease and good taste of Mrs. Somerset, and she soon tired of her visit. She was

in vain pressed to stay for luncheon, but alleging that she should not be at home in time, she took her leave with what she considered graceful condescension ; and calling Matilda, who was enjoying a cheerful and innocent conversation with Geraldine, drove off, much to the indignation of the postilions and outriders, who feared that they should find less good cheer at the rectory.

There Lady Davenport found more to her satisfaction ; for the neighbours, who loved Mr. and Mrs. Delville for themselves, and had no wish to parade the superiority of their fortune before the quiet inhabitants of Staunton, seldom imposed their servants and horses upon their small establishment. It is not to be supposed that there was any want of order, plenty, or comfort ; but what constituted these at the rectory were little compared to the luxurious style of living in servants' halls, and among London fine gentlemen, miscalled servants. All was elegant and simple ; and though Mr. Delville's income scarcely exceeded Catherine's pin-money, it would have been impossible to have found any member of the family or the house unfit at any time for the reception of their visitors. The prancing horses tore up the well-rolled carriage-drive, and the commotion brought out innumerable heads projecting from the windows. One of the maids, a regular rustic, poked

her head through a small side door, and her eye resting upon the splendidly embroidered flounces of Lady Davenport's dress, greatly amused Matilda by exclaiming, "Lauk, what a sparky tail the woman has got¹!"

When the drawing-room door opened, Mrs. Delville, who had been surprised at the unusual bustle, was giving one of her younger girls a music lesson, Louisa was reading German with another, while a sweet little boy of five years of age was spelling his lesson with an elder brother in the corner. It was "the abode of industrious peace;" and Matilda blushed when she thought of the ridiculous display her sister had brought upon them, and how much more comfortable she should have been, had her own little ponies, which she drove herself, been waiting for them. Mrs. Delville was not at all disturbed at the unexpected visit. She quietly gave orders for their accommodation, telling Lady Davenport that she must remember that rectory fare was not like that of the Abbey, but that all were welcome. Lady Davenport smiled condescendingly, which was quite lost upon Mrs. Delville. To her it was rather amusing to see her humble abode thus made the scene of display; and Matilda was too happy with Louisa to watch her sister. Accustomed as the family was to meet at table at one o'clock, no altera-

¹ This remark was really made.

tion was made in the daily arrangements. The children assembled as usual, perfectly at ease, though quiet and retiring. No private injunctions were required, no change of dress. Although, compared with the sumptuous elegance before them, they were simply dressed, they looked what they were—the children of a gentleman. Indeed, nature had adorned them with that which art never gives. The delicate features and the fine skin and hair of all the Delvilles, gave them an air of refinement which fine clothes in vain attempt; and the sweetness of their dispositions, directed as they had been in faith and prayer by the guiding hand of love and good sense, gave a singular charm and propriety to their manners. There was no loud talking, no improper haste, no asking for delicacies. All witnessed to the regulation of mind which principle alone can give. Mrs. Delville felt that although for a time circumstances might limit them to a contracted circle, it had not changed their real position. Without ambition, she was too conscious of her husband's superior talents not to feel it possible that she might one day be called upon to move in a different sphere, and that her children would certainly not remain as they were. It was therefore her desire that neither they nor herself should lessen the respect due to the minister of God, by an appearance inconsistent with

his sacred character—one which in former days was held in the highest estimation, instead of being, as is now too often the case, regarded as mean and contemptible. Nothing has lessened the respectability of the Church so much as the extreme poverty of its ministers, whose wives and families are often reduced to such a state of actual need, that it is impossible for the parent, worn down by cares and anxiety, to give his mind fully to his duties, or for his family to associate with those who are their superiors only in the gifts of fortune. The very persons who think nothing of six hundred a year given to an opera-singer for a few songs, grudge a miserable pittance to a man who passes his whole existence in their service, and whose profession as a clergyman precludes him from the ordinary opportunities of helping himself. Our Saviour might well say as He did to His disciples, — 'If ye were of the world the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.'

Even if he ventures to feel aggrieved, and his family succeed by great self-denial in making an appearance of respectability, they become the subject of the most impertinent remarks, and are exposed to an intrusion into their affairs which cannot be justified. The real Christian bears it in silence and sorrow, while the more

ambitious and worldly mind resents it. The future account for such contempt of the servants of God will be fearful. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto them, ye did it unto me," will sound in a different sense to that in which our Saviour applied it to the humble and charitable, who could not believe that what they had done in secret should thus be brought to light. Mr. and Mrs. Delville were not among the number of those thus reduced to suffering, for they were well off, though not what the world calls rich, and the love of friends and relations supplied "conveniences, our second necessities," so that every thing around them was elegant and simple, without being fine or extravagant. Although no silver dishes adorned the table, the china was pretty; the table-cloth of a fine texture and exquisite whiteness; the plate bright, and all laid according to the taste which invariably accompanies early refinement in habits and manners, which no change of circumstances will affect in regulated minds, and which, while it costs little, has an insensible and important effect upon all under its influence.

Mr. Delville came out of his study with a face beaming with love and kindness, gracefully welcomed Lady Davenport on her first visit after her marriage, and by the dignity of a noble mind awed even her vulgar pride. His conversation had an indescribable charm. It

was full of information pleasantly given, anecdote lightly introduced, quotations which flowed naturally ; and while religion was never forced on unwilling hearers, it was the spirit of every word and look. Matilda thoroughly appreciated and valued him ; but her sister's total want of mind rendered all his elevated sentiments incomprehensible to her, and all she could see was, that he was tolerably gentlemanly and agreeable for a country clergyman ; that Mrs. Delville had no right to look so like a lady ; and that the children, whom she considered only fit for governesses or stewards, were ridiculously brought up. In the mean time, Mrs. Delville, wholly regardless of her affectation, only wondered at the littleness of mind which could thus sacrifice all reality for a shadow. Cold civilities and unmeaning compliments are a sad exchange for all the warmth of real affection. "It is indeed wonderful that people can get over the natural existence and possession of their own minds so far as to take delight either in paying or receiving such cold and repeated civilities. But what maintains the humour is, that outward show is what most men pursue, rather than real happiness. Thus both the idol and the idolater equally impose upon themselves in pleasing their imaginations." Mrs. Delville had given up much of what the world values when she married ; but when she

contemplated the spiritual and intellectual beauty of her husband, as the reflection of his mind, she cared little for the spacious rooms of her father's mansion, nor regretted the vapid conversation of silly triflers, whose ideas, like crawling insects, never rise from the earth.

In the cheering influence of her husband's exalted, sober, and cultivated mind—his elevated sentiments and extensive knowledge on all subjects—she walked as it were in an ethereal atmosphere; and while she never despised others less gifted, she rejoiced in her possession, and was satisfied in his affection. To gain the approbation so well worth having, no effort was painful, and her happiness consisted in making his home a resting-place after his labours. On his return from pastoral visits, no domestic cares were forced upon him, no wearisome tales of disorderly servants. If such existed, she never troubled him, but she ever greeted him with the smile of a heart at peace with God—with that unruffled aspect which resignation to His will alone can give. Her children were taught to feel that their father's presence was to bring sunshine, and disperse any clouds which might have obscured his absent hours. Many an anxious moment was chased away by the question, "How will this look a year hence¹?" It was not to be supposed that

¹ Dr. Johnson.

anxious moments were not hers. Her children all nearly dependent upon their father's exertions, were a careful comfort; but when she remembered the promises made to the seed of the righteous, she could look up "in hope of promised spring," and leave the future to her God.

"Live for to-day; to-morrow's light
To-morrow's cares will bring to sight;
Go sleep like closing flowers at night,
And Heaven thy morn shall bless."

How much domestic happiness is destroyed by the absence of such a spirit! Weary, and often dispirited, the Christian pastor returns to his home, and there, instead of leaving his cares outside, he is exposed to the weak repinings and lamentations of a selfish woman. All the details of the day's trials are put before him; his children noisy and uncontrolled; so that, instead of entering his study with a clear head and a warm heart, his thoughts are oppressed with sorrow for the wife upon whom he has entailed such worries, and his affections chilled by incessant complaints. How different "the transplanted self-love" which lives in the happiness of another—that devotion which makes a care or pain the only concealment—that delicacy of feeling which places the choicest blossoms of affection before the loved one, and keeps the refuse out of sight. How much are

our trials lessened or increased by the way in which we receive them ! and how often do we destroy all present enjoyment by fears probably never to be realized ! Should they be so, our minds have become weakened by taking them in advance, whereas God ever sends strength to bear the burden. By living in faith and prayer, the ground of the heart is prepared for whatever seed God may put into it. Should it be sorrow, "As is thy day, so is thy strength." Should it be joy, it will be chastened by fear, and thus nothing can find us unprepared.

Matilda and Louisa walked out together after luncheon in the village, and many a poor cottage was cheered by their presence. Neither were too proud to converse in a kind and sympathizing manner, and the "great lady," as the poor people called Matilda, seemed to feel so completely that the poor and rich owned one Lord and Master, that while no proper respect was wanting, none were made to feel that an immeasurable distance existed between them. Many a voice blessed Louisa as she passed, and all regarded her companion with humble admiration.

Lady Davenport, tired of sitting so long in one place, condescendingly stepped into the garden ; and conscious that many concealed eyes were upon her, reconciled herself to its small dimensions, which, she afterwards con-

temptuously observed to her sister, were little larger than one of her parterres. As soon as the horses were rested, she rose to leave, and entering her splendid equipage, drove off, with the comfortable conviction that if Mr. and Mrs. Delville were mean enough to be contented in so humble a lot, Louisa at least must greatly envy her.

"Oh, how I should like such a beautiful carriage!" cried one of her younger sisters; "should not you, Louisa?"

"I do not know that I should," answered Louisa. "I am not at all sure that I do not think our little pony-carriage more convenient. It is so easy to get in and out; besides it is buying such a carriage at a high price with Lord Davenport."

"Oh, I forgot that horrid little man; why, he reminds me of the yellow dwarf! I would much sooner walk all my life than be tied to such an ugly little thing."

"And look," cried one of the boys, "at our nice, well-rolled carriage-road! Why, those twenty-four hoofs have torn up all poor John's work; and as to that great proud Lady Davenport, I hate her."

"You should hate nobody or nothing but sin, dear brother," said Louisa; "and I do not think that either papa or mamma would like to hear you talk in this way. Lady Davenport is more to be pitied than blamed; and as to

the road, dear Albert, it was made to be trampled upon ; so run and bring your rake, and you may surprise John by having repaired all the mischief before he returns."

The boy soon came back radiant with pleasure, and was charmed to see the hoof-prints gradually disappear. By the time that the last was effaced, Mrs. Delville came out, and calling her children around her, alluded to the conversation which she had overheard.

"It is not right, my dear children, to laugh at Lady Davenport, and there is nothing unsuitable in her carriage ; her keeping up her position is not objectionable. On the contrary, she took its duties with it ; and our dear Matilda graces it as much as her sister disfigures it. It is not the possession or the enjoyment of rank or riches which is wrong, but our setting our hearts on them. Our pony-carriage is suitable for us, and it would be ridiculous to see your father and me returning Lady Davenport's visit in such an equipage as hers ; but as there is a great difference in the claims of our positions, there is no doubt but that she has a right to do as she likes ; and perhaps ten miles of a dusty road may be more pleasantly accomplished in a light carriage-and-four than with our fat little ponies."

"But surely, mamma," said Albert, "those smart footmen and outriders are not necessary !"

"Well, dear boy, the footmen cannot help

being smart ; and though I should think the out-riders in the way, we have no concern in the matter. If Lady Davenport likes the look of them, there is no reason why she should not have them, and perhaps some wife or child benefits by what appears useless and absurd. At the same time, my dear children, we should never laugh at the habits of the rich and great. It may look like envy. Each chooses their own road to happiness. Lady Davenport, from her earliest years, has been taught to consider show and admiration all that is worth living for. You have been taught that though none of God's gifts are to be despised, true happiness does not consist in these things, which all 'perish with the using.' You should, therefore, be thankful if you are above caring for them, more especially as God has not given them to you, but never pass rash judgments on others. In God's sight, many of whom we judge only from what we see, may be far preferable to the self-righteous. We may be as severe as we please to ourselves, but should be tender towards others. The fault we should hate, but not the person who commits it."

"But then, mamma," said Louisa, "how different Mrs. Somerset is. She would have been a duchess if Mr. Somerset had lived, and yet she never gives herself airs. I always like going to Staunton Park as much as I dislike

going to the Abbey, when Matilda is not at home. What with Lady Rockingham's affected dignity, and Lady Catherine's impertinence, whenever I was there I watched the clock to see if I had sat long enough for civility."

"Well, my dear child, I can quite understand your feelings ; for it certainly is not pleasant to be regarded with contempt, when perhaps pride would whisper that accident alone had made the difference ; but if you look into your heart, you will, I dare say, find that this feeling is uppermost in your mind. At Staunton Park, Mrs. Somerset and Geraldine treat you with affection and consideration. Now, Lady Davenport would extinguish you with her magnificence and with the vulgarity of a little mind, and incessantly reminds you that you live in a parsonage, and she in a palace. Your visit to the Abbey, dear Louisa, is a lesson of humility. It is well occasionally for those who meet with so much love and kindness as you do, to be reminded that it is not a right, but God's present, and one which may be given or withheld at His pleasure. We must love a taking as well as a giving God, humbled by all He gives, and cheerfully accepting any vexations or trials He may think good to send us."

Louisa kissed her mother affectionately, and acknowledged the truth of all she had said.

Mr. Delville joined them, and as he and Mrs. Delville contemplated the simple and elegant form of their daughter, her sweet and intellectual beauty, and thought of her affectionate heart and elevated mind, it was difficult not to make an unfavourable comparison with the stiff and haughty manners of Lady Davenport; but Mrs. Delville rejected the thought, and dwelt upon the unpretending and beautiful character of Matilda. She discouraged all further comments on the visit, and Louisa checked in a kind but decided manner the remarks which her brothers and sisters were disposed to make.

The carriage-and-four rolled gaily along, and Lady Davenport, by no means satisfied with the degree of incense her vanity received in the country, where she had been known as a child, determined to make her way to London as soon as possible. Even the dread of being unfashionably early, could not lessen her desire to find herself there, and on pretence of new furnishing her house, in Berkeley Square, where the family had lived for ages, she took leave of her affectionate relatives, and left the only hearts in the whole world which cared for her, and prepared for worldly conquests.

On her arrival she was much disappointed in the family mansion. Far from rivalling the lofty rooms and noble staircases of Belgrave

Square, it was neither grand nor convenient. To add to her discomfort, she found that her mother-in-law had considerable influence over the weak mind of her son, who, too much habituated to it, had not power to throw it off. It was in vain that she tried to persuade him to change the house for one of more modern style. Not only so, but with the tenacity of weakness, he fancied himself particularly attached to certain queer chairs and sofas, which had been there in his childhood ; and, although remarkably short, he thought it necessary that there should be plenty of space, and resolutely resisted the removal of the said chairs and sofas from their adhesive propensity to the wall. He had also been accustomed to the empty tables of his mother, and could not understand why it should be necessary to cover them wholly with *bijouterie* and fanciful ornaments, stoutly maintaining that his house should not be turned into Howell and James's. Lady Davenport was in despair, and spared no entreaties, even condescending to shed a few pearly drops. Had they fallen on a hard substance they might have softened it, but being received into a sponge, they were swallowed up. All she could gain was the permission to arrange her boudoir as she liked, and she so wholly filled it up that there was scarcely space for more than herself ; and Lord Davenport's terror lest he

should demolish china, be buried in cushions, or be bitten by the lap-dog, effectually precluded all attempts on his part to enter it. She still hoped that time would effect a change; but she had sold herself for the mammon of unrighteousness, and upon that hard and indigestible food she was condemned to starve. "It was her error and her punishment." Even when two people thus united hide their misery, it is but "a grand well-acted lie." The absence of affection excites jealousy, and the want of communion of thought produces coldness. If either possess a heart, it is a bleeding one; if neither, the home is a sepulchre. What is seen at a distance, however it may glitter, looks very different on a nearer approach. No blessing can rest on a marriage of interest. It may be, and is, folly to marry imprudently; but to sacrifice body and soul for that which "maketh itself wings and fleeth away" is sin. Although Lady Davenport was far too proud to acknowledge it even to herself, she began to feel that a rich coroneted simpleton was a poor exchange for her father's noble and generous mind, her mother's admiration and affection, her brother's talent and kindness, and her sister's devotion. "She had sown to the wind, and would reap the whirlwind."

CHAPTER VI.

SPRING had again returned ; that season when the country is deserted, although—

“ The bright-hair’d morn is glowing
O’er emerald meadows gay,
With many a clear gem strewing
The early shepherd’s way.”

This lovely season has no attraction compared with the dry and barren streets of London, crowded rooms, and faded parks. And yet society has its claims, and the quick interchange of thought and feeling is as healthy to the mind, as a free circulation of air to the body. “The nature of man requires lucid intervals, and the vigour of mind would flag or decay, should it always jog on at the rate of a common enjoyment, without being sometimes quickened or exalted with the vicissitudes of some more refined pleasures¹.” How narrow, contracted, and prejudiced minds become, which live wholly shut up in a small circle of their

¹ South’s Sermons.

own. What possession trivial things take of their thoughts, what small matters irritate them, how false is their estimate of others. Wholly separated from the contentions and rude shocks to which those who sail on the ocean of life are exposed, they know nothing of its dangers, and are, consequently, incapable of guiding others, whose quicker intelligence, or greater animal spirits, lead them to venture out of the still waters into which age, disappointment, or a false view of life has forced them. Mrs. Somerset felt that it would be selfish in her to expect Geraldine to feel with her. Her own happiness had been blighted early in life. It had cast a shade, but not obscured her brighter views of this world. She remembered that she had once been young, and joyless and painful as she had found her return to society, she was willing to forget herself and allow her daughter the same opportunity of making friends which had been permitted to herself. She therefore decided upon going to London again. Her object in the education of her children had been fully answered, and Geraldine understood the constitution of the fashionable world too well to be injured by it. Her principles had been strengthened by witnessing the struggles of which her beloved mother had so often told her. Like one who forms a machine, Mrs. Somerset had watched its gradual

progress. Grieved at the sad failures she saw, she had endeavoured in faith and prayer to follow the instruction of Him whose "truth sets free." It was now the time to prove the work; for how can the defects of the instrument be ascertained till it has been tried? It is not till the engine runs that its powers can be known. If it be well formed, it will run well; but if the machinery proves imperfect, it fails altogether, seriously injuring itself, or endangering the lives of others. Should it be kept for ever in the workman's yard, it decays and is useless. So it is with the mind. The formation, if grounded upon reality, will never fail; but if only preserved from evil by being constantly confined within narrow limits, it either finds a way to emancipate itself from childish thralldom, or withers for want of nourishment. "Harmless mirth is the best cordial against the consumption of the spirits, so that it is not unlawful if it does not surpass in quantity, quality, or reason¹." Had Mrs. Somerset consulted her own feelings, she would have much preferred her quiet round of domestic duties, occasionally cheered by friendship and affection; but in sharing in the amusements of her children, she became their friend and companion, and was at hand to check them

¹ South's Sermons.

whenever the exuberance of youthful spirits might lead them beyond the bounds of prudence and discretion. Her object was not to watch what was wrong in anger, but to prevent it in love. Anxious to show every possible kindness to Mr. and Mrs. Delville, in whose congeniality of mind and feeling she had an unceasing enjoyment, she proposed this year to take Louisa to town with her. She was now eighteen, and a lovely girl. The advantages which her mother's early education and ideas had given her, had been imparted to her daughter. Although little money had been spent on her instruction, she had profited by the rich stores of her father's noble mind, and attained many accomplishments which Mrs. Delville had taught her. In Geraldine's governess she had also found a friend, so that they had studied together. With the free and full affection of a generous heart, Geraldine had brought her all the newest music, lent her the new publications, even showed her the fashionable steps ; so that although Louisa Delville had, with the exception of an occasional visit to her uncle and aunt, Sir Thomas and Lady Jane Delville, been entirely confined to the humble rectory of Staunton, few could compete with her either in beauty or in grace. Perfectly satisfied that Mrs. Somerset would in the fullest sense be a mother to their child, Mr. and Mrs. Delville consented to her ac-

companying her. It is seldom that such confidence can safely be given. Few consider the importance of the trust, and regard lightly that which may be the misery or happiness of a young person for life. Intimacies are allowed which neither parents nor prudence would sanction; thoughtless levity of conduct, which a kind word would check, is permitted, and made a subject of amusement to indifferent spectators, till disagreeable consequences follow. Then there is no measure of condemnation; and those who have encouraged the steps which have led to an unpleasant result, are the first to neglect and blame. The young are far less in fault than those to whose care they are intrusted. When a daughter is committed to another, the deposit should be regarded as sacred, and the duty faithfully performed. Such was Mrs. Somerset's feeling towards the child of her friend; and Louisa felt that repose which an ingenuous and well-regulated mind enjoys, in the consciousness of protection and guidance. The young girl who prefers independence, is wanting in good feeling; and she who will deceive a parent, who wishes to escape the eye of her mother, will not prove a faithful wife,

“For truth's a gem that fire contemns,
'Tis counterfeits that fail.”

A few days after the invitation from Staunton Park had been accepted, Mrs. Delville

received a letter from Mrs. Armstrong, a distant relation of her husband's. To the displeasure of her family she had married an attorney of small practice in a country town. At the time of her marriage, he had little more than four hundred a year, and as it had taken place before she was of age, her fortune had been withheld. She was one of a large family, and had never lived in good society, as her father had made a low connexion,—a fatal mistake as regards the future position of the children. The mother forms the home association. It is in vain to send children to grand schools to make friends and learn manners, if the mother is unrefined and ill-educated. Her influence will be painfully visible. Even the servants feel it. It may be seen in the arrangement of every room, in every look, or expression. It is the mind which forms the manners, and bad manners are bad "morals." A common mind may be detected in every action, and felt at each moment. Mrs. Armstrong was not in fact out of her element as the wife of an attorney, and if she had not been a foolish woman and proud of the name of Delville, she would have been respected and respectable. By despising herself, she placed herself in a false position ; and, by affecting to consider herself superior to the other residents of Downton, the small country town in which she lived, she gained ill-will from her

equals, while her affectation and pretension made her less acceptable to her superiors. Her husband was not an upright man, and was consequently little esteemed. He had no objection to making a fortune by the dishonourable, but too often permitted means of professional money-makers. By taking undue advantage of secret information, by dangerous speculations, buying and selling to his unfair advantage, he had in a few years accumulated an immense fortune ; and Mrs. Armstrong had the inexpressible happiness of seeing herself established in a magnificent mansion in Belgrave Square, where crowds of money and dinner worshippers were daily to be seen at her door. The consciousness that many a broken-hearted father, many a widow's tears, many a ruined son were sacrifices to her husband's shrine of wealth, never for a moment disturbed her self-complacency. The possession of twenty thousand a year was delightful ; and as long as she could minister to the amusement of others, she would not be made to feel the want of a friend, or rather, of professors of friendship.

“Surrounding throngs the millionaire revere ;” and as in the days of Timon of Athens, so it is now ; but there is a “woe against those who make haste to be rich.” Though slower and less full in its progress, the silent brook is the surest. It glides along in a gentle but

continued stream. Though never overflowing it is seldom dry, while the rushing torrent spends itself in its fury, and exhausted by its own violence is no more seen. It was some months since Mrs. Armstrong had been established in a princely style in London, when she suddenly recollected her relations, the Delvilles, and thought how pleasant it would be to astonish them with her magnificence.

“My dear,” she said to her husband one morning as she sat luxuriously ensconced in a *bergère*, sipping her coffee from the most delicate Sèvres china. “My dear, I really think it would be kind to take compassion upon my cousin Delville. You know that the unfortunate man has six children; and I dare say that that poor girl Louisa is worked to death, and would be too glad to see a little of the world. I wonder what she is like?”

“What,” said Mr. Armstrong, “those proud cousins of yours. Why, they have never noticed you since your marriage. Perhaps, however, they may condescend to remember us now that we can live as we do. I have no objection to your asking Louisa. She can sit with our Jane; and if she is in the way she can always be sent to the school-room. I hope she will be decently dressed. Poor Delville, he is desperately poor; keeps only a pony-carriage and one man of all-work.”

“Why, they have little more than a paltry

thousand a year besides their living, which is a small one ; and then that proud Mrs. Delville is much too fine a lady to do any thing but stay at home and take care of her children. I know, for I heard it through a certain Mrs. Watson, a friend of mine whom she neglects shockingly, that she always sits up as grand as the queen, and that her room is full of knick-knacks. It is no wonder that they are so poor. It really would be kind to do something for Louisa."

"Well, perhaps it might, so do as you like ; though I think it very ridiculous to see those poor people and their families affecting to live like gentlemen ; and then they contrive, I am told, to make themselves so agreeable, that their great neighbours are very condescending, and treat them as if they were like themselves ; but I forgot, my dear, I must see about the Opera-box for the season, and your new set of diamonds. There is to be a necklace for Jane as well ; and I have promised her a pony-carriage. Pray see about the masters, and be sure that you engage none under a guinea a lesson. It will be no use if they have not the reputation of it ¹. Pray write to Mrs. Delville this morning. How delighted they will be ! I am sorry that I cannot afford to send

¹ This remark was really made, and the master rejected when he offered to receive a guinea, because he had not the reputation of it.

them a hundred pound, but I am really without ready money."

Away walked Mr. Armstrong, perfectly satisfied with himself, and justified in spending his fortune as he pleased, but not in neglecting the claims of the poor. In this case his benevolence was uncalled for, for Mr. Delville's circumstances were not such as to require charity, and he would have accepted nothing from him. "Things are undone by the way in which they are done;" and it was not to be expected that any but the patronising kindness which wounds instead of healing, would emanate from such a mind as Mr. Armstrong's.

It was a few mornings after this conversation that the post brought a letter to the rectory. Mrs. Delville was sitting with her husband and children in their pretty morning-room, opening upon a well-mown lawn, fragrant with the perfume of spring flowers. A table covered in the most simple, but elegant manner, and cheered by the flow of lively and instructive conversation, was surrounded by a group of bright little faces. Louisa, in her well-made muslin gown, her beautifully shining and well-arranged hair, her white and delicately-shaped hands, was presiding over the breakfast-table. All was in order without effort; for it was the daily habit of their minds. Some surprise was exhibited on the servant presenting the waiter with an official looking document. An enormous seal

caught the eyes of the younger ones, besides a variety of Cupids and Psyches on the envelope. Mrs. Delville contemplated it for a minute, and then, breaking the seal, prepared to gratify the curiosity of the party. The contents excited as much entertainment as astonishment ; but our readers shall judge for themselves.

“My dear Cousin,—

“I dare say that you have long forgotten Maria Delville, your husband’s cousin. If you remember, his great grandfather was first cousin to mine, and I have often thought with much pleasure of our relationship. We are now living in Belgrave Square, Armstrong having made a large fortune. Only think, dear cousin, of twenty thousand a year ! I can imagine you scarcely able to realize such an income, and we think it right to share our abundance in some way. It is true that our house is not large. We have only three drawing-rooms, and what with boudoirs for Jane and myself, a school-room, and other apartments which are all occupied, we have little room to spare ; but it must be so dull for Louisa to be always in a village, that we are willing to receive her for a short time. I do not suppose that the fine people who visit us will ask out two girls, but she shall go to the play, races, and to the Opera, when our box is not full. Of course she cannot expect as much attention as our Jane, who has

a handsome fortune, but this she will not mind. Armstrong would have gladly sent a hundred pound for her outfit, but we have so many necessary things to buy, that rich as we may appear to you, we are really poor. My diamonds alone have cost more than a quarter of my income ; and I find it very difficult to dress upon my pin money, which is only six hundred a year. We cannot give money, but the run of our house is at your service. Of course Louisa has no maid, but the under-housemaid's girl shall wait on her. Our ladies' maids will be too busy. I hope, dear cousin, Delville and the children are well ; no scarlet-fever or measles, which are always in poor people's houses. I have sent some frocks and scarfs. They have been little worn, as I never let my children appear more than three or four times in the same clothes. If they do not fit they can be easily altered. And now, dear cousin, you have only to fix your own day. As the boxes would scratch our carriage, and flys are expensive, one of our servants shall be at the station to call a cab. Armstrong sends his love, and Jane desires me to tell Louisa that she shall be glad to see her ; and,

“I remain, dear coz,

“Your attached relation,

“MARIA ARMSTRONG.

“P.S. As a hack-cab will not look well

at our door, Louisa can get out round the corner."

It would be impossible to describe the amusement this letter occasioned. Far from being offended, Mr. and Mrs. Delville were extremely entertained. The children were in ecstasies of delight at the importation of cast-off clothes that were hourly to be expected. There was something so original in the plain straightforward communication of cousin Armstrong, that there was but one feeling in all the party. Albert, the eldest boy, took off Louisa running round the corner, while Henry carried a sofa-cushion as a trunk, and Annie, the youngest girl, personated the under-housemaid's girl. Mr. and Mrs. Delville allowed them to amuse themselves for some time, and then assuming a more serious tone, told them that they must not let their spirits run away with them, for that it was not right to ridicule the foibles of others, still less those of relations, however distant; that Mr. Armstrong having been made by his money, attached much importance to the golden cement which fastened him on his self-created pedestal, and that it was only his assumption that made him ridiculous. "All, my dears," said Mr. Delville, "must have a beginning; and if Mr. Armstrong had become rich by fair and honourable means, there is no reason why he should not pur-

chase station. Refinement and intellectual acquirements are the growth of years, and these might be given to his children. The man whose talents and energies have raised him from an obscure origin, is worthy of the highest esteem, if they have never been unjustly used, and the good of his fellow-creatures, more than personal aggrandizement, has been his first consideration. In the case of cousin Armstrong, we cannot feel that wealth has been accumulated on such grounds. It has been mere gambling. Still, if we cannot say good, we can be silent ; unless we are called upon to speak the truth in the cause of justice or self-defence. Then, indeed, it is the height of meanness to conceal what is right, merely from the fear of bringing discomfort on ourselves. It is the wise saying of Lord Bacon, that 'it asketh a strong wit and a strong heart to know when to tell the truth ;' but be sure, my beloved children, that it is the safest plan. A plain straightforward course always brings its blessing, while one false turning leads to inextricable difficulties. 'Crafty councils promise fair at first, but prove more difficult in the managing, and in the end do pay the undertakers thereof with desperate sorrow.' 'Do what is right, and trust,' should ever be your maxim ; and all, dear children, who ask in simplicity and faith, setting aside their own inclination, will generally, if not always, find themselves strengthened to choose, and guided to

use the right way. No after considerations or persuasions should influence you. In this world we must prepare for trial. It is not a time of rest when we first begin to feel the importance of doing right or wrong. It is then that we must put on our armour. The advice of the son of Sirach should be yours. ‘My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble.’ We must not, my dear Albert,” he added, looking at him affectionately, “be like a cowardly soldier, who, after performing well on a field-day, runs away in the day of battle ; but you will think that papa has forgotten that he is not in his pulpit, and mamma must order dinner, or you will all look very cross when two o’clock comes.”

“Mamma,” said Louisa, when Mr. Delville had left the room, “how is it possible to go through the world without seeing faults ? We might as well be blind.”

“It is not intended, my dear, that we should be thus insensible to the faults of others ; but there is a great difference in the way in which we see them. If we regard them with compassion and regret, and the desire to correct in love, we only imitate our Saviour’s example. If we regard them as a warning to ourselves, it is a duty ; but if we view them with self-complacency, and talk of them with satisfaction,

we are wrong. The sins of the tongue are of more importance than most, and their consequences the most fatal. It is generally from a desire to raise ourselves in the estimation of others, that ill-natured comments are made ; but in the end they invariably return upon those who originate them. If they have had no foundation, they will not be allowed to injure."

"And how is it possible," replied Louisa, "not to be disgusted with such low pride as Mrs. Armstrong's, or the ill-natured and spiteful remarks of Lady Sophia Cumberland and Mrs. Watson."

"It is, as you say, my dear child, very unamiable in the one, and spiteful in the other ; but in reality they are alone to be pitied. Lady Sophia is an unhappy woman. She has given up one world without finding another. Her head is filled with notions and prejudices, while her heart is untouched. She is more angry with others for not agreeing with her, than at their not doing what is right. In short, she is a victim to her own ignorance and to the cunning of a designing woman, while of real spiritual life she knows nothing. She is like a person who has lived for years upon stimulants, and who suddenly leaves them off. For in the midst of all the restraints she has imposed on herself, her mind is as uncontrolled as ever. She has tied her hands, but grace has not

changed her heart. I often feel for her, and long to open her eyes, but it is impossible while Mrs. Watson is her keeper. I never forget to pray for her. On the other side, Mrs. Armstrong will be equally disappointed in her expectations. She will not find that money alone will make her happy. The very persons who eat her dinners and attend her balls will laugh at her and despise her; her daughter will be sought by some ruined man of rank for her fortune, who will cease his attentions as soon as he has gained his end, and spend it in self-indulgence. Mrs. Armstrong will find herself a ball in the hands of others, to be tossed here and there according to their pleasure, and little to her own. Ignorant of the world, it will delight in making her ridiculous. If for a time she is amused, she will soon find that she has laboured for that which is not bread. Her letter is too absurd to be thought of for a moment. If it had been her intention to insult, she has failed; and if, as I really believe, she intended it as a kindness, it may safely be received as such. Under no circumstances would I have exposed you, my dear child, to so vulgar a mind. We may not be rich, and may be what the world calls poor; but you are far better at home unless you can leave it in a respectable way. In Mrs. Somerset you have a true friend, and in the delicacy of her refined mind you will never

be made to feel that the absence of riches is despicable. It is only when we are ashamed of ourselves that we become worthy of contempt. But I hear ten o'clock striking while I have been finishing dear papa's sermon. Go, Louisa, dear; you must be sole governess this morning, for I must answer Mrs. Armstrong's letter."

The children ran gaily to the school-room, well pleased to be under the care of their affectionate sister, while Louisa was equally happy in being of use to her mother. Mrs. Delville wrote a very kind but decided refusal to Mrs. Armstrong's invitation, much to this lady's disappointment, who had for some days made her charitable intentions to her poor cousin the subject of her conversation with all her visitors. In her heart she had hoped to reap considerable advantage from Louisa's superior connexions, and was by no means pleased at the result. She greatly bemoaned the pride of poverty, and expressed her hope that her poor cousin would not be injured by living in Mrs. Somerset's set. If she had come to her, she should have considered it a duty to make Louisa feel the difference of her position; and she sighed and looked sad: all of which acting left the impression upon the friends to whom she had thus opened her heart, of her being exceedingly envious of Louisa's appearing under such very different auspices to her Jane, and made them more kindly disposed to the poor cousin.

At Langdale Park another system had been adopted. Lady Sophia, who did not dare to resist Mrs. Watson's authority, was afraid to take Edith into society, while she was equally angry that others should enjoy it. She would not have thought it absurd that Geraldine should go to London, though she considered it wrong to take her; but Louisa's going was a crime in her eyes. Mrs. Watson was quite sure that no good could come of it, and would not have been sorry that her prophecy should prove true. In the mean while, Mr. and Mrs. Delville went on quietly with their duties, only anxious to do what was most likely to conduce to the real forming of their child's mind. They had seen so much evil consequent upon the denial of innocent amusement to the young, that they dreaded it. In the Word of God, the wisdom of the serpent is not separated from the harmlessness of the dove; and when it is, it often becomes wickedness or weakness. United, the character is well formed. Ignorance of the world renders half our goodness useless; and those who are forced into restraints which they neither understand nor appreciate, and which they hate, are as "an unclean bird caged up. For as no raking nor harrowing can alter the nature of a barren ground, though it may smooth and level it to the eye, so neither can those early disciplines of parents and tutors extirpate the minute appetites of the soul, and turn the

bad heart into a good. They may indeed draw some plausible lines of civility upon the outer carriage and conversation; but to conquer a natural inclination is the work of a higher power¹." If the spirit of excitement exist, it will find vent; and there is often as much dissipation and as little profit in the incessant chase after preachers, religious meetings, gossiping working-parties, and ill-timed visits among the poor, and charitable institutions, as in the votary of fashion. If the mind is as it should be—

" The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves—a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

And in seeking greater things, we often do ourselves more harm than good. How grievous is the remark so often made, that no children turn out so badly as those of professing Christians! And how deeply must all lament that it should be too often the case! The children are neglected, and left to servants or strangers, while the mother is giving her whole time to the instruction of the offspring of others. The domestic hearth is deserted for the lecture or prayer-meeting, and the children perhaps dragged to hear that which they cannot understand—their minds strained and their spirits

¹ South's Sermons.

wasted, till they learn to attach these wearisome scenes to religion, and to hate that which, if presented to them in its true shape, is "altogether lovely." The young cannot feel as those do who are advanced in life ; and if the bough is rudely bent, it either breaks or grows crooked, while, if carefully and tenderly guided, humoured and directed instead of being forced, it becomes a luxuriant branch. Others may then sit under its shadow, and its fruit will be sweet to them. After a time, the mind, if not entirely devoid of understanding, feels the world to be unsatisfying ; like the dove, it finds no rest for the sole of its foot. It is only the carrion crow that will take refuge on the carcases. The pure and elevated mind, after a short flight, returns to the ark, and, anxious as it had been to try its powers, no longer wishes to stray.

Mr. and Mrs. Delville had passed many anxious hours in meditation on this subject—many an earnest prayer for guidance had been offered up ; and their conclusion, both from observation, experience, and good sense, was, that it was better, as the opportunity had offered without being sought, to allow Louisa to judge for herself, than to keep her away from that which her lively spirits and inquiring mind would naturally lead her to wish. There are some dull and automaton spirits which can be moulded at

will, and with such, indifference makes the way plain ; but where God has put a steel, and not a wooden, sword into the scabbard, it will either rust or force its way through. The one does no harm and no good ; the other may occasionally do mischief, but, if properly directed, preserves the life of its owner and of others. “ If the eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light.” “ Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.” As the salt prevents corruption, so by mixing, as our Saviour did, with men, our light, if it be a pure one, will so shine before men, that they, seeing it, will glorify God. It is the absence of salt in ourselves, more than the corruption of others, which injures us. “ To the pure all things are pure.” By separation our Saviour evidently implied a separation from sin, a difference in spirit, of motives, and in our conversation, not in our dress, manners, or common intercourse. By so doing we lower His standard, when our endeavour should be to attain unto it ; nor should we condemn those who, by constant watchfulness and prayer, are able to witness to this far higher degree of grace—

“ Who are in the world, and yet not of it.”

CHAPTER VII.

It is some time since we have heard of Edith Cumberland, who, in accordance with her father's determination, had been sent to school. The change had, in some respects, been of use to her. It had softened the asperities of her character, and taught her more self-control. In all external advantages she had gained considerably, and on her return to Langdale, her father was pleased with the improvement in her appearance and manner. He strongly urged the propriety of her being properly introduced into society; but Mrs. Watson, well aware that all her influence depended upon the exclusive possession of Lady Sophia, counteracted all his persuasions, and Edith had the mortification of seeing both her young friends go to London, leaving her alone in her unhappy home. Had it been otherwise, the case would have been different; for the interchange of feeling and the "sweet aspect of love" in domestic life have an inexpressible charm. None such existed at

Langdale. There "the heart of the righteous was made sad, whom God hath not made sad." It was vacancy, not an exchange of excitement for rational amusement and interest. Colonel Cumberland, finding it impossible to alter Lady Sophia's determination, went to London alone, as usual. The brothers were absent, and Edith wandered about in idleness and solitude, open to any passing impression that might present itself. She was not a girl of strong mind, or she might have found amusement and instruction in her father's library, and occupation in the village; but she had no kind friend to direct her. From being incessantly chided and told that she was very wicked, an accusation which she considered unjust, her feelings were hardened, and she was disposed to think religion a cold, hard, and dry duty, and one in which she found no pleasure. What she saw under its name was of this nature; for how can it for one moment be supposed that our faculties were given us to be extinguished? It is not the use but the abuse which is dangerous, and nothing exposes to sin more than ignorance. "Light itself is faith, but the armour of light is knowledge. An ignorant man is a disarmed and naked man." He is open to every man's folly, believes every thing he hears, and has nothing to oppose to false arguments and imaginary theories, while the well-instructed have the

head so well stored, that the understanding is strengthened, and the ground so pre-occupied, that stray seeds and wandering notions find no place.

As Lady Sophia was sitting in her boudoir, Mrs. Watson rushed in almost breathless, and with a look of mystery and a screwed-up mouth took possession of her usual chair. Lady Sophia's curiosity was excited, and looking up from one of the morbid, sentimental books over which she dreamed away her existence, as her mind could receive little else, she asked, what could be the matter?

Mrs. Watson gave a deep sigh, and answered :

"Only think of Louisa Delville's going to London with Mrs. Somerset ; can you imagine any thing more shocking?"

Lady Sophia raised her hands and eyes in horror, and repeated, "Louisa Delville going to town with Mrs. Somerset ! Can it be possible?"

"Oh, I know it is true, for a young woman who works in our village has been sent for to the rectory, to help in preparing her dresses. Only think of the expense, and then the ideas it will give her ; and the Delvilles are proud enough already. My Susan would never think of such a thing!"

Even Lady Sophia could not refrain from making a comparison in her own mind, between the graceful sylph-like Louisa, and the

great, awkward, red-faced Susan Watson ; but her indignation at the idea of Mrs. Somerset's taking Louisa was too great to allow of any other feeling.

“And this is what all Mr. Delville's profession comes to, to allow his daughter to go to London.”

In her heart, Mrs. Watson was dying of envy. She had vainly endeavoured to get a footing at Staunton Park, but had been treated with civility and coldness. Mrs. Somerset found no pleasure in being toadied. She was quite above it. She neither wished to patronise nor be patronised. She sought equality of mind, and this was not to be met with in Mrs. Watson. If her practice and profession had agreed, she would have received her gladly as the wife of a clergyman, and, as such, treated her with respect. As it was, she was of that class who, according to Dr. Johnson, have lost the civility of a tradesman, without having gained the politeness of a gentleman. Her religion was her outside garment, and had been her passport into society. It had nothing to do with the heart. She was especially envious of Mrs. Delville, whose reality in all things, from the least to the greatest, was visible in every thought, word and work ; who without pretence or presumption was in her proper place, either at Langdale, Staunton, or

the Abbey, indifferent if vulgar minds slighted her, and at ease wherever she was received. The respect and affection with which the family were regarded was a perpetual thorn to Mrs. Watson, and she would have gladly lessened it if possible. It was utterly incomprehensible to her, that without station or fortune Mr. and Mrs. Delville and Louisa should be generally sought and appreciated, while she was passed by without the slightest acknowledgment. She was bursting with envy,—“Envy which makes us see what will serve to accuse others, but not to perceive what may justify them. A truly good man is always disposed to excuse what is evil in others, as far as truth will suffer him.” This was not the case with Mrs. Watson. So elevated a mind as Mr. Delville’s was quite beyond her comprehension, and so she put her own littleness into his greatness, and judged him accordingly.

“I have no doubt,” she continued, “but that Mr. and Mrs. Delville hope to catch Mr. Somerset for Louisa. You know that he is to be Duke of Ormanton.”

“I can quite believe it,” observed Lady Sophia, “and I know that Lady Davenport suspected it long ago. At all events, she hopes to find some great match for Louisa.”

“I had sometimes hoped, madam, that your Edith might have married Mr. Somerset,”

smilingly observed Mrs. Watson. "I hear that notwithstanding his mother's dreadful worldliness, he promises to be a useful member of society."

"Oh no," said Lady Sophia, "Mrs. Somerset would not like him to marry Edith. She would prefer one of her own set."

"Why to be sure she is very proud; but I can hardly imagine that though she treats me with such contempt, she could despise your daughter."

Just as these words were spoken, Mrs. Somerset and Geraldine were announced, and Mrs. Watson, all smiles and courtesy, left her seat to lead her to the sofa of the *malade imaginaire*. After the usual greetings had passed, she asked Mrs. Somerset if it were true that Louisa Delville was going to town with her.

"Certainly," she answered; "and Geraldine and I are looking forward with the greatest pleasure to so agreeable an addition to our party."

Mrs. Watson nodded her head, in the way vulgar people alone can do, and looked mysteriously at Lady Sophia. Geraldine, finding that Edith was in the garden, asked if she might join her, and gladly escaped from a conversation to which she could find no response in her feelings.

"Do you not think," said Lady Sophia,

“that it will put notions into her head inconsistent with her position in life?”

“In what way?” said Mrs. Somerset. “Beyond the simple accident of fortune, there is little difference between Mr. and Mrs. Delville and myself; and it will be a decided advantage to Louisa to see a little of the world, in which she will probably take part at some future time. Were she unfitted for society, or were she to return to a vulgar home, I should act differently. I should not have thought of inviting Susan Watson,” (Mrs. Watson had left the room,)—and Mrs. Somerset added, “whenever Louisa is with her own relations, her associates and friends are the same as she will meet at my house, as her parents were well known formerly.”

“Suppose,” replied Lady Sophia, “that Mr. Somerset should become attached to her. I am assured that her father and mother hope it may be so.”

“You are quite misinformed, I assure you. Such sordid motives have no part in their consent to my taking Louisa. Besides, Ernest is scarcely nineteen; he will be at College nearly all the time that we are in London, which at once disproves the ill-natured report which has reached you. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Delville are ambitious for their children; but they feel that a knowledge of the world is the best

remedy for its evil influence, and I hope that I shall justify the confidence they have reposed in me, by returning their dear child as pure as she leaves them. Some years hence, if Ernest should choose Louisa, I should rejoice in receiving her as my daughter. These things should be left to themselves; and unless my son were to make a disgraceful connexion, I should not interfere. Interference seldom does good, and many a mother has suffered much for it in after years, by her child's making a worse marriage than the one she prevented."

Lady Sophia, finding it useless to insinuate suspicion into Mrs. Somerset's upright mind, turned to other subjects, till the carriage was announced, and she and Geraldine took leave and proceeded to the Abbey.

As they drove up the avenue, which led through Langdale Park, both felt pained by the ill-natured remarks they had heard. Far from having received the slightest impression unfavourable to Mr. and Mrs. Delville, the superiority of their character became more striking, for no want of charity was ever evinced in their conversation. They only reprov'd by example, and witnessed to the glory of God by a "good conversation coupled with fear," not the fear of a slave, but the fear of grieving the Spirit of Him whose name is Love. Lady Sophia, totally unconscious of her own sin in

breaking the greatest of all spiritual graces—charity—gave way to the most unkind feelings towards others. Our Saviour's precept, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," formed no part of her religion, and she spent the greatest part of her time in criticisms on her neighbours, who often left her house, with the remark, that instead of hearing Christian conversation, they were no where entertained with so much ill-natured gossip.

Geraldine had found Edith in a most unhappy state of feeling, and felt quite anxious about the result of the pernicious system of which she was the victim. Her residence with a variety of other girls, though it might have chastened the expression of her feelings, had in no degree corrected them. On the contrary, it had increased her sense of the injustice done to her.

One morning as she was strolling in a sentimental mood through a shady path in a small wood outside the park gate, she saw a little bird on the path, which appeared injured. She had been reading some of the beautiful, but most enervating and unhealthy poetry of Byron, a volume of which had been secretly conveyed to her through one of her former associates at school, such a proceeding being one of the sad effects of the want of confidence in a mother. In stooping to raise the bird, she dropped her book,

and unconscious of the loss, walked on. She had not however been unobserved, for, concealed behind one of the trees stood a youth of three or four and twenty, and immediately upon seeing the book fall, he rushed forward and following her, presented it with a respectful bow. He was tall and handsome. A large deep blue eye was shaded by long lashes, resting upon a pale cheek. His dark hair curled naturally over a high intellectual forehead. The nose was slightly aquiline and delicately formed, with a short upper lip, but not so short as to denote weakness of character. His motions were graceful, and it was evident that he was of gentle blood. In dress there was no affectation, and his manner of giving the book, was that of ease and respect. This was quite an event in Edith's dull and uninteresting life. During the whole of the day, her thoughts wandered towards the handsome stranger, and the next morning her steps naturally turned into the same shady path. A little more time and attention was given to her dress, which was elegant and *negligée*. On this point her father was determined to have his way, and, as he paid her allowance himself, Mrs. Watson had no power to prevent her looking like an elegant girl. In a simple muslin, with a black silk mantilla, and a pretty little straw bonnet, she looked very lovely. Her complexion was delicate, her countenance soft,

and her hair as smooth and shining as a raven's wing. *Bien chaussée*, and *bien gantée*, the fair Edith set out on her way. Lady Sophia breakfasted in bed,—her father was absent ; no tender mother's eye, no settled principle was at hand to direct her wandering steps. As she entered the path, her expectations were not disappointed, for the same handsome youth was reclining on a mossy bank, with his eyes apparently fixed on a book, but in reality intent upon watching Edith. She walked on gravely, but as she approached the spot where he sat, she stumbled over a projecting branch, and would have fallen, but for his arm which checked her progress. This brought on a short conversation. He hoped that she had not hurt herself, and she blushing thanked him for his assistance. Indeed, on attempting to walk she found her foot was hurt, so that she could not refuse his proffered arm. At first she was unwilling to do so, for the still small voice of conscience would be heard, and whispered, that it would have been wiser and more prudent to have declined it. She also remembered the painful result of her former dereliction from the path of duty, but whoever stops to dally with conscience, will find its remonstrances become weaker and weaker. Inclination is an earnest pleader, and they who walk in their own strength will inevitably fall. Thus it was with

Edith, and she succeeded so far in quieting her mind as to accept the offered arm. She found an elegant and refined mind. The conversation turned upon poetry, and, as she listened to his high and sentimental flow of eloquence, she felt new life. As she approached the park gate, her sense of propriety, or rather the fear of discovery, returned, and saying that she had appointed her maid to meet her at the lodge, she gracefully bowed her thanks, and contrived to slip in unobserved. The pain in the foot had been quite forgotten, but she remained stationary till the receding figure of the stranger had disappeared, and then flew like a lapwing across the park. She reached the house just in time for luncheon. Mrs. Watson made some remarks on her heightened colour, which tended to increase it still more, but Edith was too much pre-occupied to resent it as usual. When she retired to her room she had again recourse to her maid, and asked her if she had heard of any new families in the neighbourhood.

The maid answered that she had heard one of the gardeners say, that the small house called "Vine Cottage," about a mile from the village, had lately been taken; "but I should not think, miss," she added, "that such as you would notice the people who may live there."

"Why?" said Edith, "many very nice people

live in cottages, and I should like you to find out who has taken it."

"Why, miss, what can it signify to you? I heard Madam Watson say that they must be mean people, for that their butcher's bill was almost nothing, and their washing still less."

"Such things, Mary, are no proof of gentility to any but common minds. On the contrary, superior people eat to live, and do not live to eat; so I beg, Mary, that you say no more, but do as I bid you."

Mary went grumbling out of the room, wondering to herself why her young mistress should trouble herself about that trumpery Vine Cottage. For her part, she was sure that she would not condescend to speak to the servants. How could maids living in a cottage be of the same material as those of the great house?

She went, however, to her particular friend, John the gardener, and consoled herself with a pleasant flirtation. On questioning him, her curiosity was fully satisfied. The cottage had been taken by Mrs. Melcombe, the widow of an officer, a lady of respectable connexions, but of small income.

"I'll warrant," said John, "that Miss Edith has spied Master Melcombe, for he's an uncommon fine gentleman to look at."

"Oh! that accounts," said Mary, "for her

fine colour this morning. Well, poor dear lady, I hope she may find somebody to amuse herself with, for it really makes my heart ache to see her moping about all alone as she does. Why, it is enough to stifle all her ideas."

"I understand now," said John, "why Master Melcombe gave me half-a-crown to let him peep into the garden the other evening, when the family were at dinner. I thought there must be something in the wind."

Thus had this sweet and delicate girl exposed herself to the comments of two low minds. How do such things degrade! how dark and muddy are the paths that lead to sin! How much happier Edith would have been, had she turned her mind to useful occupation. Why was her mother's folly to be visited on herself? But where was the anchor? She had none, and the sea on which she was about to launch herself, was a most dangerous one. She ascertained that young Melcombe was a barrister, and on a visit to his mother, who had retired to Vine Cottage, to enable her to meet the necessary expenses of his education. He was intelligent and clever; full of enthusiasm, but without the foundation which keeps it within the bounds of prudence and discretion. Great talents, without wisdom and learning, are as dangerous as an engine without a driver. "Wit is brushwood; judgment is timber. The first

makes the brightest flame, but the other gives the most lasting light." So it was with Algernon Melcombe. With great powers of mind, he was idle; and while he should have been looking as his highest hope to the pleasure of relieving his mother of his expenses, and of becoming distinguished in his profession, his time was passed in sentimental reverie, or in reading and repeating poetry. In the mean time his studies were neglected, so that though idleness may travel leisurely, poverty, which soon overtakes her, was rapidly approaching. It was an unfortunate day for him when he first saw Edith, for his imagination was fired and his vanity flattered, and he immediately formed plans for the future, which were neither rational nor justifiable. With the selfishness peculiar to most men, he never for a moment thought of all the sacrifices Edith must make, should she be persuaded to leave the comforts and luxuries to which she was accustomed. The comparison between Langdale Park and a miserable lodging in London, did not occur to him. Self-gratification and the *éclat* of carrying her off, was all he thought of. The day of retribution was in his idea far distant, but there is an eye that never sleeps. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Many a secret sin, many a wrong done to the widow and fatherless,—many a betrayed parent or a deceived child will rise up in

judgment. Even in this world the payment seldom fails, and those who watch the ways of Providence may generally trace it, though it may not be equally visible to indifferent observers. "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," but the way of the sinner leads to destruction. Day after day, Edith might be seen stealing into the wood to meet Algernon Melcombe, while his deserted mother wondered why he no longer accompanied her in her walks, or cheered her at home. She had given up a most comfortable residence, where the happy days of her married life had been passed, for the humble cottage which she now occupied, that she might be enabled to make a larger allowance to her son. At a time of life when the transplanting of an old tree leaves no hope of new branches or fresh leaves, she had left all that was dear to her, with no prospect of forming new connexions. A widow no longer young has few charms for youth and gaiety. Early friends will not leave her alone in age, and if she be a child of God, she will cease to be dependent upon her fellow-creatures for enjoyment; but those who are in the morning of life have little sympathy with the way-worn traveller, though now and then—

"God's gracious care will send that way
Some spirit full of glee,—yet taught
To bear the sight of dull decay,
And nurse it with all-pitying thought."

Edith possessed no such spirit. She knew nothing of the love which brightens the sorrowing heart. Her affections had never been drawn out. They had found no opportunity for expansion. They were like a pent-up stream which at last bursts the bounds not formed by nature, and rushes through forbidden channels. Of Mrs. Melcombe she never thought. Her own parents occupied no place in her heart. To her father she was almost a stranger; from her mother, an alien. Her brothers were worse than nothing, and would have encouraged her in doing wrong. The elder was leading a gay and disreputable life at college; the younger had little sense, and was not of an age to have any influence over her. With all these disadvantages, she was under the fatal influence of a gifted mind without principle. Louisa Delville was absent; and, excepting a yearly formal visit to Langdale Park, Mr. and Mrs. Delville never called on her mother. Lady Sophia found no congeniality of feeling in them. It would have been fortunate for Mrs. Melcombe had her lot been cast at Staunton. There neither sickness, poverty, or widowhood would have separated her from sympathy and kindness. Far from it,—they would have been so many additional claims upon the attention of both families. Instead of being drawn from her, her son would have

been an object of interest to all, and in Mr. Delville he would have found a guide and friend. The time for his return to London was nearly come, and yet he lingered. His temper became irritable and excitable, and Mrs. Melcombe vainly endeavoured to regain the love which she seemed unconsciously to have estranged from her. Edith had more time than ever to herself, for Lady Sophia was incessantly occupied with the daily details brought her by Mrs. Watson of all that Mrs. Somerset, but more especially Louisa Delville, was doing. This lady acted the part of jackal to the lion. She had some obscure relations, living in a very unfashionable street near the Regent's Park, with whom she corresponded daily. The natural consequence was, that all her information having been filtered through the minds and mouths of ladies'-maids and footmen, each adding and subtracting according to the sources from which it flowed, was generally incorrect, or without foundation. The most absurd stories were told and freely believed, and if, when Lady Matilda Mertoun called, she ventured to deny them from a real knowledge of facts, she was contradicted as partial and interested. She herself had declined going to Lady Davenport, preferring to stay at the Abbey to cheer her parents. Lord Rockingham, who had been an

invalid, was unable to move ; and her mother, convinced that she should never make her any thing beyond a good girl, and somehow finding her as such a greater comfort than a fine lady, was contented to occupy her arm-chair, and enjoy the sweets of her garden, instead of the asperities of fashion. Matilda was, therefore, completely established as a nurse to them both. It was a real pleasure to her ; and though nobody enjoyed society more, or was more fitted to give and receive pleasure, she was always cheerful and happy. On hearing that Mrs. Melcombe was living in the village of Langdale, she made a point of visiting her, whenever she called on Lady Sophia. Had it not been for the conviction that God would not permit injury to Louisa from the envy and malice of Mrs. Watson, Matilda would have felt much vexed at her ill-natured reports. Satisfied of their untruth, she left them to contradict themselves ; while Louisa, safe under the protecting love of Mrs. Somerset, and the affectionate companionship of Geraldine, was extremely entertained with the wonderful things she was supposed to have said or done. Conscious that a person must be insignificant indeed who escapes detraction, and equally convinced, that though its object, reality never becomes its victim, Mr. and Mrs. Delville were not disturbed. They contented themselves

with daily letters of affection and advice, and satisfied that Mrs. Somerset would never sanction or allow any thing not strictly correct, they left envy and detraction to itself. For as David writes, "Their own tongues shall destroy them;" and another wise man observes, that "Envy, like chickens, always returns to its own roost." Mrs. Watson would have shown more wisdom and discretion, if, instead of gossiping with Lady Sophia, she had remained at home and taken care of her children. Susan Watson would not then have been hanging out of the window all day in the hope of seeing Algernon Melcombe, and her brothers and sisters would not have been in the kitchen or in the stable. It might truly be said of her, that "Keeper of vineyards, mine own have I not kept." While she was watching all Louisa's actions, her own charge was left to run wild. Susan could never gain one look from Algernon; and as the wood in which he walked with Edith was on the other side of the park, she had not succeeded in tracing him. Every day made Algernon and Edith less sensible of the impropriety of their conduct. Neither stopped to consider the gulf of misery into which they were plunging. Surrounded from her infancy with every luxury, Edith had no real conception of the sacrifices she would be obliged to make. She forgot

that apart from her parents she had nothing ; that if she offended them, they were at liberty to withhold her fortune, and that she knew nothing of Algernon's character, habits, or associates. His mother, whom she had only seen at church, was a quiet, lady-like looking woman ; and her cottage, though small, had evident signs of good taste in the arrangement of the garden. The servants looked respectable, and all about her proclaimed the gentlewoman. Still, Edith knew nothing of her family, and it was evident that she was far from rich. From the wish to avoid suspicion, Algernon had denied his mother even a visit from Edith, so that she had never heard her speak, the surest test of real refinement. Had she for one moment stopped to consider, she would have felt that the man who under any circumstances will tempt a girl to deceive her parents, can never be trusted ; that one who will decoy her into misery from the desire of self-gratification, cannot have a generous mind ; and that when the excitement of imagination is over, he will not respect the wife who has proved to him how artful she could be. Instead of appreciating the artifice she has practised, and the sacrifices she has made, mutual reproaches will follow ; and in all probability, when the discomforts become serious, hatred will take the place of that which was unworthy

of the name of affection. No kind mother had ever placed these truths before Edith, and she was thus left to self-destruction, without one voice to whisper in her ear "beware," or one arm extended to save her. When the charm of mystery ceased, when Edith no longer appeared as the representative of rank and fortune, but looked the poor man's wife—when Algernon became again a student, the romance of the present time would be all over. It was not his being a briefless barrister, nor his poverty, that made the marriage objectionable. If he had presented himself openly and honourably at Langdale Park; if Edith had rested her hopes of comfort in industry, integrity, and principle, her fortune, which was twenty thousand pounds, added to his allowance and the blessing of her parents, would have been enough for real happiness, even though luxuries might be denied. Both were too infatuated to see their danger. Edith, from the morbid state of her mind, was wholly engrossed by this, her first and only subject of interest. "Solitude," says Dr. Donne, "is the devil's scene, and we never sin so much as when we are alone." One train of ideas fixes itself in the mind, nothing diverts it, and whether it be anger, affection, or fear, the solitary, unless under the influence of Divine grace and strong powers of mind, finds himself the victim of one thought, and at last

becomes incapable of sound judgment. All who are much alone will acknowledge this to be the case ; and in a clever work by a pious physician, insanity is mentioned as a frequent consequence of too great seclusion, or separation from innocent amusement in young people. Edith's is not an imaginary story ; the original is far more painful than her departure from the "straight path." It was at last decided that the elopement should take place, and it was only necessary to make the arrangements so as to escape detection. Edith resolutely refused to go to Scotland, or to travel any distance alone with Algernon. Mary, her maid, had been taken into her confidence, and she was determined to take her with them. Her allowance, which was two hundred a year, had not been spent, and as her father had just added another half year, she was not without money. Algernon, under the pretence of returning to London, had received a hundred pounds from his mother, so that they were tolerably well provided for the present. Lovers have no future in prudential considerations. The name of Melcombe was totally unknown at Winton ; the clergyman was a stranger, and knew none of the neighbouring families, so that by a little management the banns were published without detection. It was settled that Edith, under some pretence, should drive

her pony-carriage to Winton, and that with Mary as her bridesmaid, and a friend of Algernon's from town, the ceremony should be performed, and that afterwards they should proceed to London, where lodgings had been engaged for them. When the eventful morning arrived, Edith's heart nearly failed her, and she was tempted to turn back. A sense of degradation crept over her, the fear lest her father should wholly cast her off, the consciousness that she should lose the respect of Mrs. Somerset and of the Delvilles for ever, crowded upon her mind. No higher principle protected her. The fear of man alone arrested her, and then the remembrance of Algernon's last words, his beauty, his enthusiasm, contrasted so strongly with the misery of her position, that, jumping into her pony-carriage, she drove "dull care away," and dashed recklessly on her way. On her arrival she found the two friends awaiting her. The groom who accompanied her was ordered to water the horses, and she walked, unsheltered by a parent's love, to the altar. Nothing disturbed the ceremony but her conscience, though the clergyman looked suspiciously at the party. As all was correct, the fees paid, and the marriage registered according to law, he could not interfere; but where was the blessing on such a union, imagined and contracted in falsehood,—dread

of exposure destroying even momentary enjoyment,—future discomfort and retribution frowning in the distance. It was the grave of integrity, to be watered by the widow's tears and cursed by a father's rage.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT is time that we should inquire into Mrs. Melcombe's history, and, leaving the fugitives to their fate, retrograde for a while. Maria Grantley was the daughter of one of a class which in fashionable vocabulary is called "nobody;" that is to say, her father, Mr. Grantley, and his ancestors had for centuries occupied the same estate, maintaining it in respectability and comfort, without diminishing or dissipating the rents by gambling, extravagance, or vice. Each proprietor in his generation had intermarried with some family of equal condition, but, indifferent to the fashionable impress which is often given to coin of inferior metal and light weight, they had preferred living esteemed and loved among their own friends, to placing themselves under the patronage of some fine lady in London, who, under pretence of introducing them into her set, would expose them to laughter and contempt. The Grantleys respected themselves too much to descend from

their real position, one which had been theirs for ages, and however they might be "nobody" in fashionable slang, they were "somebody" in the estimation of all who prefer gold to tinsel. Maria was their eldest daughter, and, without being remarkable for beauty, was an interesting girl. Her father's fortune was considerable, and being a sensible man, he had ordered his establishment according to his station, without attempting or wishing to vie with those whose rank requires more display. He had consequently been able to lay by handsome fortunes for his daughters and younger boys, without injuring his estate, which he hoped to transmit to his son as unencumbered as he had received it. He was greatly beloved and respected. No cottage was unknown to him, and he had endeavoured to discharge faithfully the trust committed to him. He regarded his dependents as "souls committed to his charge, that he might watch over them as the sheep of Christ, whom He bought with His death, and for whom He shed His blood," and yet he was "nobody;" and if he exposed himself to the gaze of the fashionable world, the noble-minded country squire, with his old-fashioned Christian courtesy, and a heart overflowing in love to God and man, would be pointed at as an object of ridicule, and his son almost ashamed to own him, because men loaded with vice and im-

morality would compare his country-made coat and unfashionable gait with their own courtly manners and dress. Mrs. Grantley had been a devoted wife and mother, and was as much beloved as her husband: "Her children arise up and call her blessed, her husband also and he praiseth her."

Such was the home of Maria Grantley. When in her twenty-first year, a regiment was quartered in the neighbouring town after some years of service. In those days, soldiers were really soldiers,—not effeminate youths receiving commissions for the pleasure of a few years of idleness and amusement, indignant even at the painful effort of a drill, and after a short time worn out, not by service, but by ennui; selling-out to waste the remainder of their lives in listless idleness and genteel poverty. Charles Melcombe, although scarcely thirty, had fought many battles, and, young as he was, might be called a veteran. With the hospitality of a good old-fashioned country gentleman, Mr. Grantley visited the officers who had proper introductions; and while the house was only opened to them at regular hours, and Mr. Grantley allowed no morning loungers or familiar rides and walks, he was ever ready to welcome them at his dinner table. It was in this way that Maria became acquainted with Captain Melcombe, and each almost unconsciously felt drawn to the

other by mutual sympathy. Far too honourable to wish to engage her affections without the sanction of her parents, and deeply sensible of the sacrifices she must make, as he had little beside his pay, he gradually withdrew from the intimacy, and found excuses when he received invitations. Mr. Grantley, who liked him, and had seen nothing to excite suspicion in his manner to his daughter, was grieved at the loss of his society, and on meeting him accidentally playfully reproached him with his absence from his table, and hoped that he would join their party as usual, adding that Mrs. Grantley and his daughters would always be glad to see him. He was the more pressing, as there was nothing in Charles Melcombe's circumstances which could justify the supposition that he was seeking a husband for his daughter. He made a hesitating answer, but as the colonel rode up at the moment, it passed unobserved, and alleging that he had an engagement he rode off.

His brother officers, who had been aware of the interest he felt in Norton Court, and one of whom had overheard Mr. Grantley's invitation, advised him to take advantage of it; adding, with the absence of delicacy so much to be lamented, that if the old gentleman was such a fool as to make it, he would be a greater to neglect such an opportunity of gaining

Maria's affections, more especially as there seemed plenty of "tin." This was quite inconsistent with his high sense of honour, and to the surprise and unmeasured ridicule of all his associates at the mess he wrote to Mr. Grantley, to say that after the kind invitation he had given, he could not take advantage of it without first acknowledging his preference for his daughter, which his circumstances might render unacceptable. Mr. and Mrs. Grantley were taken by surprise; but upon consideration, they were willing to see Captain Melcombe, and ascertain from himself what his prospects were. At the same time they judged it prudent not to mention it to Maria until they were satisfied on this point. Hers was too well-regulated a mind, and she was too much the intimate friend of her mother, to have given her affections unasked, so that although she might feel an interest in Captain Melcombe, she was not engrossed with his image. It appeared that Charles Melcombe was a younger son of Sir Henry Melcombe's, whose baronetcy had been given him upon his retiring from the office of lord mayor. This had taken place before his marriage; and some years afterwards his fortune and gentlemanly manners had gained him the hand of Lady Selina Melmoth, the daughter of a poor Irish peer with a large family, too thankful to have

one of his eight daughters so well provided for. He bought a large estate in Yorkshire, where by his good sense and knowledge of business he secured the regard and respect of his neighbours. His eldest son had succeeded him; Charles was the second, and to him and his other children he had left ten thousand pounds. As Maria would have a similar fortune, added to his pay it was enough for happiness. The knowledge of her being beloved by Charles Melcombe, and that her parents would not withhold their consent to the marriage, had changed her regard into affection, and he was soon the accepted lover. His noble conduct in not taking advantage of her father's inconsiderate advances, as a witness to his probity and honour, had tended more to rivet her chains than all the tender words that could have been said. It is as a symptom of the mind that lesser things are of so much importance. What the world laughs at and calls clever, the Christian views with horror; and yet from the earliest years "taking in," as schoolboys call it, is too often encouraged by parents as a joke. Fagging, which is nothing more than selfishness and tyranny of the strong over the weak, is supposed to be a good ingredient in the formation of an amiable character,—fighting, a proof of high spirit. How much more scriptural it is, to instruct the elder

in kindness and consideration to the younger boy, to make him his peculiar care, when if the little one loves, he will gladly serve him in return. If the rule over the spirit were inculcated, we should no longer hear of children permitted to murder each other ; for fighting, when death ensues, can be called by no milder name, or men fighting duels from wounded pride : “ Besides, that which they suppose loss of honour is no such thing ; the measure of honour is the judgment of the knowing, and the pious, and the virtuous, who will value and applaud the passive magnanimity of such an one, that durst look a duty in the face in spite of scorn, and conquer the scoffs of the world, of which the most reputed for valour are afraid ; all that he loses is the opinion of those who rate honour by a false rule, and measure glory by the standard of their own ignorance, vanity or rashness ; and the same persons who condemn him for this, would slight him as much for not talking obscenely or scoffing at religion and whatever is sacred, and for not drinking himself to the condition of a barrel or a sponge, or not swearing. Those indeed who look upon not doing of such things as pedantry would, no question, account all refusal of a duel poorness and pusillanimity. I neither will nor dare pronounce any thing in limitation of God’s mercy, but this I shall say, that according to

the standard rule and tenor of God's revealed will, he that dies in a duel, undertook from an unjust cause, affords no ground for any one to judge that he is saved ; for he dies in his sin, directing his sword to his brother's heart, so that there is nothing but his last breath passing between his murderous intention and the final giving up of his accounts to God, before whom he has no other cause to allege for his dying in this manner, but that he was proud, passionate, or revengeful ; sad qualifications to recommend a man to the tribunal of his Judge¹."

It is the want of moral courage which makes so many mean and cringing characters. Self-preservation and expediency are the rules of conduct. If more would act like Charles Melcombe, we should never hear of clandestine marriages, or false claims of honour, or the other mean tricks and low cunning which worldly minds call honest, but which the Christian without hesitation pronounces false. There are no white lies in scriptural truth, no prevarication which serves the purpose of a lie. Yea is yea ; nay is nay. "Call him wise whose actions are a clear 'because,' to a clear 'why.'"

It has been said that "a man is the son of his actions, not of his position in life;" for how much may his own conduct and disposition im-

¹ South's Sermons.

prove, or alter, or injure his position, if his efforts are made in faith and prayer: and this was Charles Melcombe's case. Although his father might not boast of a long line of ancestors, his son might be thankful that he was an honourable man, one who feared God, one whose fortune had been made, not by artifice and fraud, but by talents and industry. Thankful for his riches, as a means of making others happy and of doing good, he took no pride in them, nor was he of that sordid nature that turns a man's mind into his money's mercenary. He regarded money as the means to an end, not as the only object to be attained. His profits had been fair and honourable, and were consequently sure; while many who had passed him with mockery for his slow progress, were now too thankful to eat of the crumbs which might fall from his table.

All was soon settled, and though the marriage ceremony was quietly performed in the village church, although no favours were to be seen, no coroneted carriages rolled majestically to the humble porch, though no newspapers recorded the magnificent dress of the bride or the bridesmaids,—there was the silent aspiration of the tender mother, the blessing of the father, the affectionate though weeping smile of the sisters, the manly greeting of the brothers, the sympathy of all the tenantry, and a noble and gene-

rous heart ready to receive the bride, contemplating her as a sacred charge committed to his care, to cherish for life with the hope of a lasting union for eternity. Nor did Charles Melcombe ever fail in the performance of the vows he had taken upon him. It is true that they were not without trials, and Mrs. Melcombe had many long and painful separations to bear, for her husband's duty called him far away, where it was impossible for her to follow him without increasing his anxiety, particularly when the little Algernon was added to her care. Time had passed on ; the love of friends, and the affection of her own family, were a constant balm to her spirit under her severest trials. At home she always met with sympathy. Of her husband's family she saw little. Sir Henry, unlike his father, was a purse-proud man ; the sisters were married, and were little congenial to her, and the younger brothers were dispersed. Charles Melcombe, whose mind was formed in a different mould, found Mrs. Melcombe's family more congenial than the proud Lady Melcombe, who notwithstanding the earldom of the grandfather, could never forget that her husband's father had been lord mayor, and by her ridiculous affectation and earnest endeavour to ascertain who every body's grandfather was, constantly reminded the world of what had long been forgotten, or, if remembered, could only increase respect for

the son of a man whose father's life had been an honour to him.

They had been married some years. The birth of a daughter had increased the happiness of their domestic hearth, when Charles Melcombe was again required by the call of duty to leave his now grieving wife. Both seemed to feel a fatal presentiment that they should never meet again, and, for the first time, Mrs. Melcombe found it impossible to maintain the composure which had hitherto supported her husband. The fatal day came when the dreaded parting must take place. Who has not felt the awful stillness of the deserted hearth? the vacant chair? the absence of the cheerful voice that has so often gladdened the heart?—but when the beloved one is exposed to the perils of war, then, indeed, it may be called the bitterness of death. So it was with Maria Melcombe; she clasped her infant to her breast, and tried to smile at Algernon's little feats of bravery, but it was in vain. The arrow had pierced her inmost soul, and she could only weep and pray. Day after day passed; the post, which she watched in agonizing suspense, brought affectionate and cheering letters from her husband, and by slow degrees she resumed her daily duties and regained the composure of her mind. Her father and mother had wished her to return to Norton Court, but her feelings were not attuned to so high a key as to

be able to share in gay spirits, or to be with light hearts, and she was too unselfish to wish to cast a shade upon the happiness of others. She therefore took a pretty cottage at Fulham, so as to be nearer the Horse Guards, that she might hear the first intelligence from the scene of warfare. At last she received the dreadful news that a battle had been fought, and her husband taken prisoner. It was a day of days to his afflicted wife. A few days later she heard that there was to be an exchange of prisoners, and that he was among the number. Another week of painful suspense passed, when the dreaded, and yet longed-for postman came to the door, and with the usual unconcern with which he carries life or death, handed in the fatal message of woe to a heart already bursting. The first glance satisfied her that it was not her husband's writing; a black seal was still more ominous, but she broke it with a trembling hand, and her eye had scarcely rested on its contents, when one agonizing scream rent the air, and proclaimed her a widow. A widow indeed, not one whose tie was merely broken,—not a gay widow,—not an indifferent widow, but a widow indeed: "One whom the Lord hath written desolate." To her the sun would never seem so bright, for it would shine upon her husband's grave. The world would be nothing, for he was not in it. It may be well said, "'Tis the survivor dies." A little

sympathy, some love, a great deal of excitement, and all is forgotten ; all goes on as before ; outwardly all is the same, but the heart is withered ; the smile of the lips no longer has its spring from the heart, and while friends talk and say how well the trial is borne, the sufferer is like one who feels death inevitable and resigns himself to the will of God, conscious that "upon them who will not do the will of God, the will of God is done." The will of God had indeed been fearfully performed on Maria Melcombe, for her husband, on hearing of his probable release, just as he was being dragged to an ignominious death, thoughtlessly exhibited more exhilaration than his cruel captors approved of, four of whom seized him, and with the most unrelenting brutality, hung him to a lamp-post¹. His voice died in a prayer for Maria, and her name was his last word. It was many hours before his afflicted widow became conscious of her dreadful loss, and weeks before she left her room. Then came an additional sorrow, for her infant pined and died, and was consigned to its early grave. Mrs. Grantley had immediately joined her daughter, but understood and respected her grief too much to do more than soothe and follow nature in love. There was no anger in her grief, for she had turned to Him "who is a very present help in time of trouble."

The wound which was too deep to be healed

¹ This is no fiction, but really happened.

closed slowly under the influence of Divine grace, leaving a calm and peaceful sadness which would never cease till death closed the door to this world's burden, and opened that which would unite her to her husband in His presence, where is "fulness of joy."

From that time she had wholly devoted herself to her son. All her associations with Fulham being of a painful nature, she returned to Maidenhead, to the home where her happy years of married life had been passed. There she felt that her husband's spirit still breathed, that she should still be where his foot had trod, his voice had been heard, where her child might yet be reminded that he had once known a father's love. In her circumstances she was at ease, for the cruel manner of her husband's death had excited so much sympathy, that a pension of two hundred a year had been added to her income. In friends she was rich, for her gentle and unaffected manners, with her kindness and consideration for the feelings of others, and her husband's upright conduct, added to a peculiar charm of manner, had secured them the attention which proceeds from love. Her return to Woodbine Cottage was welcomed with a melancholy pleasure by all her neighbours. Each vied with the other in decking out her pretty drawing-room. One had worked her a chair, another an ottoman: vases of the most beautiful exotics covered her tables, and

when she arrived, her heart, warmed by such proofs of affection, could have almost expanded with fresh hopes, but that he who would have rejoiced in seeing her thus tenderly cherished, was no longer by her side. For a few days delicacy and sympathy withheld all but silent tokens of affection. Such a grief was too sacred to be disturbed. Her feelings on this her first return to her old home were fully appreciated ; and her neighbours were not offended at a continued seclusion. They found no pleasure in gratifying idle curiosity at her expense, and were more pleased by the confidence she evinced in their affection, than if she had proved the contrary, by distressing herself from the fear of giving offence. How seldom is this the case, and how many of the sick and sorrowing are victimized to a self-love, which regards itself as slighted, if not admitted at all hours, and under all circumstances ! How few consider the sufferer and not themselves, and how many would sooner exclude or drive away the nearest and dearest friend or relative than give up self-appreciation ! Mrs. Melcombe's mother remained with her suffering daughter, and in her society and tender sympathy she could be calm. Algeron at the time of his father's death was six years of age, and a noble boy. His rich brown hair, tinged with gold, hung in clustering curls upon his rosy cheek. His large blue eyes and long black lashes gave him a poetical air, while his

manly limbs and noble bearing proclaimed him to be the soldier's child. His mother loved him too well to spoil him, and watched over him with the greatest care. More anxious for his well-doing than for her own selfish gratification, and deeply conscious of the great disadvantages to which an only child is exposed, she sent him when he was eight to a clergyman in the neighbourhood, who received a limited number of pupils. Of animal courage Algernon possessed his full share. No boy could strike him with impunity, no boy insulted him without a bold retort. Endowed with great talents, he was, as is too often the case, extremely idle. Conscious of his powers, he allowed time to pass on which should have been employed, trusting that he should make it up at last, and thus constantly failed. It was in vain that his mother endeavoured to persuade him that if his talents were greater than those of other boys, it was more essential for him to exercise them, as otherwise, they would gain by time, properly given, what he lost by negligence. Infirm of purpose, he promised much and performed little; and thus he passed from his first school to Eton, and from thence to college, without having in any way distinguished himself. Still Mrs. Melcombe hoped that as he grew older, he would become wiser; but the love of self-indulgence is an inherent principle, and resolutions made in our own strength are as light as air.

Though Algernon might not yet neglect the act of prayer, he never prayed. There is a great difference between praying and saying prayers. It is true that his lips moved, and his knees bent, but the thoughts wandered, and the heart gave no response ; so the prayers ascended not on high, and no blessing was returned. Many were the hours passed in earnest supplication by his widowed mother, and although for a season "He answered her not a word," she lived in the hope that "the bread cast upon the waters," would be found some day. Time passed on, and the boy became a man, at least in his own estimation, and he went to college, and considered himself no longer subject to his mother, though still bound to her in love. Quite forgetting that Oxford was a place for study, and not of amusement, unmindful of all the sacrifices made by his mother to maintain him in respectability, he passed his time in idleness or self-indulgence. Instead of Greek and Latin, he studied English poetry and the lighter branches of literature, which, while they refined his mind, and exalted his feelings, would be of little use in procuring independence. On his first return home, the change in his manner was painfully visible to Mrs. Melcombe. The love that is unwilling to make sacrifices for the object of its affection, is not genuine. The son who, while he affects tenderness to his parent,

is ruining her by his extravagance, has no real regard for her. She was grieved to find that he had been led into expenses far beyond his allowance, and that the assurance of his companions, that, as his uncle Sir Henry Melcombe had no son, he would at some future time inherit his property, had led him into this excess. Mrs. Melcombe vainly impressed upon him the folly of this expectation. She had hitherto purposely kept him in ignorance of its possibility, as she considered it wrong to "wait for dead men's shoes." She assured him that his uncle might yet have a son,—that he might not outlive him, and that then she should be answerable for his debts.

"You are, my dear son, grasping at the shadow, and losing the substance. Use what God has given you, and do not waste your present possession in the expectation of a future that may never come. Remember, my beloved child, that 'those who would walk fast through life and advance to some end, have little time to gather flowers during their progress, or to repose on beds of roses.'"

"Still, my dear mother, flowers are very sweet and tempting; and don't you know another saying, that 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy;' and after all, there is no harm in turning the eye towards the broad lands of uncle Melcombe."

“Much, my dear Algernon,” said his mother ; “it leads you to rest on a false foundation, perhaps to wish another dead, and afterwards to despair, if disappointment should follow. How much I wish that I could persuade you to set steadily to work, and to use the talents which God has so freely bestowed on you.”

Algernon was touched by the earnestness of his mother's manner, and by her pale and tearful countenance. For a moment he believed himself sincere in his promises, but though strong in body, he had little power of mind. Moral courage was wanting, and his career at college, though marked by no open dereliction from the path of duty, was unsatisfactory and unprofitable. From thence he was entered at Lincoln's Inn, and, painful as was the effort, Mrs. Melcombe gave up her pretty residence at Maidenhead, and moved into a small house in London, where she could make a home for her son. For two years she had lived in this vain hope, but finding that he seldom returned to dinner, and that, night after night, it was morning before his knock was heard, she began to feel that she had made a useless sacrifice. In addition to this painful conviction, he distressed her by constantly asking for money. Duns were frequently at her door, and it was this unpleasant state of things which had obliged her to lessen her establishment, and to retire with an

old servant, who had lived with her since her marriage, to the village of Langdale. Here, with two additional maids, and a man-of-all-work, she established herself, and was, as we have seen, an object of speculation, if not of suspicion, to Mrs. Watson's uncharitable mind; both of which were greatly increased by her evident desire to remain in seclusion, and Algernon's total indifference to the nut-brown charms of the robust Susan.

The commotion consequent upon the disappearance of Algernon and Edith can be more easily imagined than described. It was Algernon's birthday. Mr. and Mrs. Grantley had long been dead, but one of Mrs. Melcombe's married sisters and her two daughters had come to stay with her. The little drawing-room had been carefully dressed with flowers, the usual meagre fare had been exchanged for various little luxuries. Mrs. Melcombe had discarded her customary sad garments for a gayer dress. Even old Jane, the maid, had fresh trimmed her cap, and put on her Sunday gown. All was bright; the sloping lawn was radiant in the sunshine, and blooming with flowers. The cousins were anticipating a pleasant stroll with Algernon, and with their mother rejoiced to see their much-loved aunt look more like her former self, than she had yet done. She was still a handsome woman. Although grief had turned her dimples

into long furrows, and all trace of her former bright colour had disappeared, expression and feature remained :—that expression which arises from

“ Self-devotion, high and pure ;
Thoughts that in thankfulness endure,
Though dearest hopes are faithless found,
And dearest hearts are breaking round.”

Her's was a nature perfected, not corrected by grace, and she ever shed a calm and cheerful light on all around her. There was such a grace in all that she did and said, that though her weekly bills might not amount to Mrs. Watson's estimation of gentility, she needed no such letters of recommendation to mark her as a true gentlewoman. Three o'clock was the dinner hour, it being in the middle of a hot July when it was impossible to walk till towards evening. It was seldom that Algernon's morning stroll was prolonged after twelve, but one o'clock struck, and made Mrs. Melcombe look up from her embroidery-frame with surprise and an expression of astonishment. When two sounded in her ear, it was exchanged for one of anxiety. The needle no longer plied its way wittingly, and she rose to inquire who had last seen her son, and which road he had taken. Her servants told her that he had as usual gone into Langdale Park, but that he had said something about extending his ramble, to see the

view from a distant hill. This tranquillized her, but many a time did she turn anxiously towards the door, and every sound filled her with apprehension. At last a horse came dashing down the road from Langdale Park, and the rider, seeing the servant standing at the gate of the Cottage, stopped to inquire if Miss Cumberland had been seen, as she had driven out early in the morning, and had not returned. It was feared that some accident had happened. Mrs. Watson, too glad of an excuse to penetrate into Vine Cottage, rushed in without ceremony, and engrossed as she apparently was with her subject, took in at a *coup d'œil* that which she afterwards called the ridiculous extravagance of the furniture, the walls covered with pictures, and the table with ornaments, rivalling Lady Sophia's boudoir. The dreadful state of distress in which she found Mrs. Melcombe, the painful anxiety of her sister and her daughters, the evident fear of the servants, made no impression upon her obtuse mind, and it was not till Mrs. Melcombe was carried, unconscious of all that was passing, to her bed-room, that she found it necessary to cease her innumerable suggestions, her sly hints, and covert inquiries for Mr. Melcombe.

Thus the hours passed heavily on till towards evening, when Edith's pony-carriage appeared slowly wending its way up the hill that led to Langdale village. Every body rushed out to

await its approach, and eager and loud were the voices that assailed the driver. All that he could tell was, that after Miss Cumberland and Mary had left the carriage, he had proceeded, according to her orders, to water the horses. He had waited till five o'clock, when he began to wonder at the delay. He had often accompanied his young lady before, but had never remained more than an hour. At last, anxious and surprised, he had set out to inquire at the different shops at which Miss Cumberland was accustomed to call; but nobody had seen her. He had, however, met another servant, who told him that he had seen the ladies alight; that immediately after the carriage had turned the corner of the street, two gentlemen had joined them; that curiosity had led him to follow, and that he had traced them to the church; that he had crept in, and concealing himself behind one of the pillars, had witnessed a marriage; but that his master having ordered his horses at a particular hour, he had been unable to stay after the ceremony. This led to further inquiries, and the boy had ascertained that the whole party had set off by railway to London. The servant's description exactly answered to that of Algernon. Here indeed was the confirmation of Mrs. Melcombe's fears. The blow was too much for her exhausted frame; and before a letter from her son reached her, she

was seized with a nervous fever, and became for a time lost to all sense of suffering.

A despatch was immediately sent for Colonel Cumberland. Mrs. Watson sat with Lady Sophia, artfully endeavouring to insinuate that Mrs. Melcombe had been in her son's confidence; and with no self-reproach for the part she had acted in driving Edith into so sad a step, she found no vent for her indignation. For the first time, Lady Sophia did not altogether respond to her unkind remarks and animadversions. Conscience would be heard. She could not but feel that Edith had not been treated with either the affection or attention which a child had a right to expect. Mrs. Watson appeared in a new light, and she rather dreaded her husband's view of the matter. Still she endeavoured to comfort herself by false assurances. Mrs. Watson administered a double dose of flattery and camphor julep; and by the time Colonel Cumberland arrived, Lady Sophia had decided that Edith was a hard-hearted, ungrateful girl, Algernon a monster, Mrs. Melcombe artful and designing, her husband a tyrant, and Mrs. Watson an angel. Colonel Cumberland's rage was unbounded. Like all worldly minds, he quarrelled with consequences of which he alone was the cause. He need not have neglected his daughter because her mother was too much engrossed with herself to think of her. His chil-

dren were his own, and he had a right to do as he liked. Why were they to be the victims of a foolish mother, when he could have prevented it? His character was in his own keeping, and must necessarily suffer from the misconduct of his children. If he had placed a responsible person about Edith, an educated and sensible woman, capable of guiding her affections and directing her understanding, she would not have been exposed as she had been to danger. For the sake of peace he had allowed Lady Sophia to have her own way; but the moment that her folly touched himself, his feelings were aroused. His daughter's pale cheek, listless manner, and weary life had never affected him; but now that she had disgraced him by leaving his house in so unceremonious and indelicate a manner, his indignation was unbounded. Having clearly ascertained that the marriage had been performed in proper form and order, he left Edith to her fate, and turned all his anger upon Mrs. Melcombe. Nothing could persuade him that she had not been a party to her son's conduct; and although every servant, and even the villagers, maintained that Edith had never been inside Vine Cottage, and that, excepting at church, Mrs. Melcombe had never seen her, he remained in the conviction of her concurrence. She was still unconscious of her own or his loss; and for

more than a week remained in a state of total ignorance of all the passing events of life.

Edith had written to her mother, and candidly confessed that the melancholy life she had led, with no companionship, affection, or occupation, had driven her into the course she had taken. She earnestly requested her forgiveness, and mentioned that she was in lodgings in a small street leading into Lincoln's Inn-fields. To this letter no answer was returned. Colonel Cumberland, in a rage, declared that as Mr. Melcombe had carried off his daughter, he might maintain her, and he refused to assist her in any degree. Disgusted with Langdale Park, where he had known nothing but discomfort, he determined upon leaving it for an estate in Devonshire, which he had lately inherited by the death of his elder brother. To add to his trials, he heard in a few days that his eldest son, who had been leading a life of vice and immorality at Oxford, after raising enormous sums upon his mother's property, which was entailed, had married a young milliner, and was gone abroad. The youngest gave every promise of living the life of a dormouse. His energies, checked by the absence of all manly exercises, so necessary to youth—his mind closed to all that could excite, instruct, or enlarge it, for ever poring over some sentimental stories, the fruit of morbid

feeling, in which all the good children die, and all the bad ones live and enjoy themselves—he had become a kind of drone, useless from ignorance.

It is much to be regretted that so many stories with this result should be written. Dying and goodness become so intimately associated in the mind of the young, that it is difficult to persuade them that the more serious thoughts and the ripeness of age in a child whose health is failing are the consequence and not the cause of illness. It is not uncommon for children to express a dread of being too good, lest they should die. A young mind can scarcely distinguish between consequence and causes, and draws its own conclusions. It is indeed too true that—

“ The flower in ripen’d bloom unmatch’d
Must fall the earliest prey ;
Though by no hand untimely snatch’d,
Its leaves must drop away.”

For to those whom God considers fitter company for heaven than for earth, He gives glimpses of spiritual light, which, as an emanation from a Greater light, reflects its lustre on all around, and renders so doubly dear the child who is thus on the wing to the pure and ethereal regions of eternity. “ Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” But to those whose business is yet on earth, the duties, the chari-

ties, the occupations of life, should be the lesson taught. He that lives well will die well. Love is the essence of spiritual life—the love of God diffusing itself in love to man. Not what the world calls love, which is only another name for selfishness. We love them that love us, not because we desire their happiness, but because they conduce to ours. This miscalled love is the torment of its object, and becomes a miserable slavery instead of a willing affection. The love our Saviour inculcates is an expansive feeling; the earnest desire for the good of another, the wish to give pleasure, whether it be to the old or ugly, the young and pretty, the interesting and uninteresting, the agreeable or stupid; in short, to do as we would be done by, instead of altering this injunction as Louisa Delville once did to her mamma, into “doing to others as they do to us.” This would be a dangerous guidance, and one which would lead to fatal results; and yet such were the feelings that influenced all at Langdale Park each doing wrong because another had erred; and such are the feelings which actuate too many of us.

It has been well said that “wise silence is the soul’s harmony;” and to this Mrs. Melcombe responded. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to think, she bore her grief in silence. Conscious of her integrity, neither Colonel Cum-

berland's unjust accusations, Lady Sophia's contempt, nor the waspish stings of Mrs. Watson, disturbed her. She was, in fact, the greatest sufferer. Hers was the deep wound which the loss of affection and the absence of integrity in one near and dear must occasion. "Just resentment is the child of integrity;" and she felt justly angry with her son for his deception, with Edith for her duplicity, and with Colonel Cumberland for his injustice. It was a sorrowful anger for the breach of honour, for the proofs such conduct gave of her beloved child's failure in principle, for the sin against God, not for the injury to herself. The difference is great between such a sorrow and the sorrow of the world. The one is a pure stream of wounded love, and pity for the offender; the other is hard and unbending. Memory conjures up every exciting circumstance, every stinging word. The triumph of the malicious, the mockery of the weak, wounded pride, mortified self-love, combine to shoot a deadly hate into the heart. While godly sorrow weeps and prays, and tries to soften to itself the causes of anger, worldly sorrow expends itself in violence, till it sinks into a cold and sullen stream of concealed hatred.

The departure of Colonel Cumberland was a sad day for Mrs. Watson. He had never liked her, and was determined effectually to prevent

her ever entering into his new residence. There he felt that he had a right to be master, a right which he had scarcely liked to assert hitherto. He secretly accused her of all the domestic misery that had overwhelmed him at Langdale Park, and all her hints of poor Lady Sophia's need of a companion were in vain. The carriage drove from the door, the house was closed, the servants chuckled with delight at Madam Watson's discomfiture, and she turned her steps slowly and sadly to the vicarage, mourning not over the loss of her friend, but over all the lost advantages the separation entailed.

“ For little souls on little shifts rely,
And coward arts and mean expedients try ;
The noble mind will dare do any thing but lie.”

CHAPTER IX.

VINE COTTAGE and the village of Langdale had become painfully disagreeable to Mrs. Melcombe. All that had given it charm was gone. She had written sadly but kindly to her son, willing to receive Edith, whom in her heart she regarded more as an object of compassion than blame. Under other circumstances she would have felt differently; for the mind must be degraded, and lost to all sense of duty and affection, which forsakes a tender mother or an affectionate father, and practises the meanest deceit, regardless of all the distress her disappearance must occasion, to elope with a man whose very wish that she should act in so improper a manner proves him unworthy. Even Algernon might be partially excused, for his deep compassion for Edith's unhappy position had touched his heart, his want of moral courage had led him on, and his neglect of prayer had left him open to temptation. In his devotion to Edith he had forgotten the cruelty to his

mother, and thus, his eyes being blinded, he had fallen into a snare from which it was impossible to extricate himself.

The distance between the two villages and the constant occupations which a faithful pastor finds for each day, had hitherto prevented much intercourse between the Delvilles and Mrs. Melcombe, but sorrow or sickness was a call to which Mr. Delville was always willing to lend a listening ear. Perfectly satisfied that the mother was wholly blameless, and her previous history having been related to him by a mutual friend who had requested him to visit her, he mounted his horse, and was soon at Mrs. Melcombe's door. She welcomed him gladly, for her heart was yearning for sympathy. His kind and manly voice cheered her, and when he came into her sick room, and took her hand with the beaming expression of Christian love which the God of love alone can give, her heart was softened, her dry eyes were refreshed by tears, and she seemed to receive new life. Their conversation was long and interesting, and closing the interview with a short but most impressive prayer, he left her, not alone with her sorrow, but cheered by the sensible presence of a protecting and merciful God. Her heart was elevated by a calm and holy feeling, and strengthened for future trial. Mr. and Mrs. Delville daily brightened her lonely

residence with the cheerful influence of their happy minds. No feelings of jealousy disturbed their domestic peace. The wife was only anxious that others should share in the treasures of her husband's mind, and in the spiritual consolation he so well knew how to impart. As Mrs. Melcombe's health improved, her dislike to Langdale increased. It was impossible to find the slightest congeniality of mind in Mrs. Watson, still less in her husband. She could take no pleasure in the spiritual or temporal gossip which formed the only subject of their conversation ; she could not share in their uncharitable judgments, or erroneous conclusions, more especially as, like all upright minds, she instinctively shrank from a double tongue. There was no other society in the village ; so that she was wholly dependent on her own resources. Mr. and Mrs. Delville felt deeply for her, and were anxious, if possible, to remove her to Staunton. There was only one farmhouse vacant, but this, with Mrs. Somerset's consent, might be turned into a most comfortable residence. It was pleasantly situated on a slightly sloping lawn, where the bright sun might ever be seen from its windows. The garden was in tolerable order. A pleasant orchard was on one side, and a meadow on the other. The house was far enough from the road to be wholly concealed by some large

trees which grew at the bottom of the lawn. It was a pretty old-fashioned building, with gable ends, latticed windows, and a porch with a seat on either side. Careful not to excite Mrs. Melcombe in her weak state by hopes which might not be realized, Mr. Delville represented the circumstances to Mrs. Somerset, who was in London. She most willingly acquiesced, too thankful that neither power nor will were wanting to lessen the many cares and anxieties of their widowed friend. In the mean time, Mr. Delville persuaded Mrs. Melcombe to come to the rectory till her house could be put in order. To this she thankfully acceded, and in the cheerful and delightful atmosphere of Christian kindness she regained a composure unknown to her for years. Algernon frequently corresponded with her, and as Colonel Cumberland had resolutely refused to give Edith one shilling of her fortune, his letters were far from satisfactory. Her tender feelings would have led her to despoil herself for his sake, but the good sense of Mr. Delville interposed, and he advised her to allow him to feel for a time the discomforts which his rashness had brought upon him. It might, he added, be the means under the blessing of God of making both Algernon and Edith more reasonable, of bringing them to the conviction that life was not a romance, but stern and often painful reality ;

and he promised to ask Mrs. Somerset to keep her eye upon them during her stay in London. This she was quite willing to do ; and immediately after the receipt of Mr. Delville's letter ordered her carriage, and drove to the lodgings where Edith had been established. She did not communicate her intentions to Geraldine and Louisa, or allow them to accompany her. Conscious as she was, that Edith's mistaken education had been the entire cause of her misconduct, and recognizing a right feeling in her determination to be married before she placed herself in Algernon's power, she still felt it to be desirable that she should not be admitted into free intercourse with her former friends, until she had proved by continued good conduct, that this one false step was to be her last. She found her in poor lodgings, miserably furnished, with no carpet on the stairs, but in a splendid dress, the gift of Algernon, on a wretched horsehair sofa, with few chairs around her, and none of the little comforts which to her were almost become necessities. With the usual improvidence of young people who have known no self-denial, her husband had presented her with bouquets and perfumes, which appeared sadly out of place in the dirty bare apartments they occupied. He had yet to learn what are really necessities, and that all that they had hitherto regarded as such,

had become unattainable luxuries in their altered circumstances. Edith received Mrs. Somerset with an affectionate but anxious manner. She knew that she must disapprove her conduct; but when her sad appearance presented itself, and she remembered her as she used to be at Langdale Park, her heart opened towards her, and she kissed her tenderly.

It was then that Edith gave way, and in broken accents opened her heart to this kind and sympathizing friend, who, while she felt for her, gently pointed out to her the greatness of her fault. Mrs. Melcombe had continued her son's allowance of three hundred a year, but to Edith, who had "seen it rain plum-puddings" at Langdale, and who had imagined as too many do that things come of themselves, it was as a drop in the ocean. They had already expended the money they had brought with them, and it would be some weeks before the next quarter would be due. It was true that necessity had forced Algernon to exertion, and he now passed the greater part of the day at his chambers; but it is more easy to retain a good character than to regain a lost one, and he was so well known as a lover of pleasure, that he was a briefless barrister. Those who on former occasions had so constantly found his room empty, no longer came now that he was at his post. He returned day after day with a disappointed

look, and Edith vainly endeavoured to cheer him. Happily for her, circumstances had detained Mrs. Somerset in town long after the fashionable season was over. Louisa Delville had returned to her happy home; all her duties were resumed, her brothers and sisters were delighted to have their young governess again, and she with equal pleasure gathered them around her at their daily lessons. At other times, she would amuse them with the account of all she had seen in London, and delighted them with the pretty presents she had brought them. Nobody was forgotten, and many a poor villager received the prettiest and newest cotton, the value of which was doubled in their eyes by its coming from London, and by the act of remembrance. All set to work to prepare some articles of ornament or comfort for Mrs. Melcombe's new house. Seeds were sown in the garden, plants transplanted, and no pains spared to make it look gay. The younger ones gladly obeyed Louisa's presiding genius, and it was with unmingled pleasure that they looked forward to the day when Mrs. Melcombe should see it all. But we must return to Edith's less pleasant abode. Although she was daily annoyed with the discomforts of her position, the kind advice which she had received from Mrs. Somerset had lessened her difficulties. She spent less on her dress, and

more on comforts. In her simple well-made cotton, and her hair carefully smoothed, she looked far better than in shabby finery. With the assistance of Mary, she contrived to make her poor lodging look less cold and miserable ; and though she found her fingers suffer by their unusual application to the needle, and the air of a close street very different to the free and pure breezes of Langdale Park, she yet found a secret pleasure in doing her duty, and was rewarded by feeling less weariness during the day, and by seeing Algernon refreshed after his labours by her improved cheerfulness. Mrs. Somerset would have gladly at once provided her with better lodgings, and many comforts, but she considered it more desirable that for a time she should realize her situation, and the punishment consequent upon a dereliction from the path of duty. At the same time, she secretly desired the landlady to put some additional articles of furniture into the bare rooms, apparently from herself. She sent Edith some improving books, such as would strengthen her character, and fit her for the duties of a wife or mother. She strongly impressed upon her that this season of separation from worldly excitements might be the means of future blessing to her for life, and that she was young enough to redeem the past, by proving that the absence of consideration, more than sin,

had led to so wrong an action. More especially she pointed out to her the danger of losing her husband's affections, which he had evidently shown to be without a sure foundation,—that this could only be done by making his home cheerful and comfortable, and by raising her mind to his, which, although wanting in discipline, was singularly gifted and talented,—that she should now make up for the defects of her early education, which she was young enough to do, and by constant and earnest prayer she would be enabled to follow up her good resolutions. The winter was long and dreary, and when Mrs. Somerset left London, she was quite without friends. The solitary life she had led at home had given her no opportunity of making acquaintance or friends, and she was so out of the way, that she was wholly passed by. Algernon, who was proud, did not like Edith to be seen in such miserable lodgings by the few men whom he knew, and rejected all offers of introductions to their wives. With a pride unworthy of his natural advantages, he would not allow her to accept civilities which he was unable to return, forgetful that the society of a richly-endowed mind is a far better repayment than a well-covered table which may be seen at any club or hotel. All this was a great trial to Edith, but Mrs. Somerset continued her support by constant correspondence ;

and though she shed many tears, and could not at times restrain a feeling of reproach towards her husband for having put her into so painful a situation without preparing her for it, she by degrees became reconciled; and when she saw him going on more steadily, and employment slowly creeping towards him, she felt that the clouds were dispersing, and that hope beamed through the mist and darkness which had surrounded them. Lady Davenport had never condescended to visit them. It was impossible for her fashionable equipage to be seen in such a neighbourhood. Her career had been a splendid one; and vanity, the ruling principle of her heart, had been gratified, for she had been admired and envied. By attacking her husband's weak point, vanity, she had succeeded in persuading him to new furnish her drawing-rooms, and otherwise improve the house. To her inexpressible delight, on examination, it was discovered that it was so impregnated with dry rot, that it would require to be rebuilt. The consequence was, that she was established in Carlton Terrace, where her splendid dinners, magnificent balls, and elegant *déjeûners* at her villa near Richmond, supplied objects of interest and conversation to the fashionable world. All who were not invited hid their diminished heads, and were obliged to be content to be nobody. It was on the

morning of one of these splendid fêtes, that the announcement of the Dowager's death was received. Although nearly eighty, the poor old lady, covered with diamonds and rouge, had nightly sat at the card table; her withered fingers glittered with jewels, her shrivelled neck and shrunken arms were still uncovered, and false ringlets hung upon her rouged cheek. It was at one of these card parties that, the evening before, her head had fallen on her breast, the cards dropped from her hand, and the world closed on her for ever. It was true that she still breathed, and on being bled appeared more or less conscious, but she gave no sign, and died as she had lived, without acknowledging her God, or scarcely knowing her Saviour. Lady Davenport's first feeling on hearing of her mother-in-law's death was vexation, and her first exclamation:

"How provoking that she should have died to-day, when all is prepared for our party. Why did not she die to-morrow¹?" She burst into tears; and Lord Davenport, who had really loved his mother, gave her credit for natural feeling. She soon consoled herself, when she remembered the considerable jointure which would be added to their fortune, that mourning particularly suited her complexion,

¹ This remark was really made.

and that the London season was nearly at an end. The Dowager had a splendid coffin, which the servants exhibited as a show to all their acquaintance. The hearse, drawn by six horses with their nodding and sable plumes, and a long train of empty carriages, represented the mockery of a woe unfelt by any. Mourning coaches filled, not with sorrowing friends, but with servants weeping over the loss of a good place, proclaimed to the world, that the Dowager Marchioness of Davenport was gone on her last earthly journey. As soon as the procession reached the outskirts of the town, the long train of hired mourners returned. All the paraphernalia was huddled into the hearse with the body. The attendants mounted on the top, the horses trotted gaily, while laughter and merriment accompanied the remnant of mortality it contained. "The funeral was performed," as far as London was concerned, but the same affectation of solemnity would be resumed as soon as it approached Davenport Castle. Among the unsophisticated natives of the country, death, though only in the shape of a dowager of eighty, might remind them that a soul had returned to the God who gave it; but no such feeling disturbed the minds of those whose trade was made by death. In Eaton Place, the steps were well washed as soon as the hearse left the door, the hatchment

was put up, and no trace was henceforth to be seen of one who had lived and died in the service of the world, and the world alone,—an idol which demands all the heart and in the end forgets its devotees, leaving them to vacancy and woe in their fading days, and to oblivion when death has claimed its own.—Beyond the grave we dare not look.

CHAPTER X.

ALL proceeded pleasantly at Staunton. A more happy party could scarcely be imagined. No envy or secret jealousies disturbed a harmony which had its spring from "the truth that sets free." Each rejoiced in the happiness of the other. The sad were cheered, the sick were comforted, the happy met with sympathy. How seldom is this the case, and how much more easy it appears to be, to "weep with those that weep," than to rejoice with those that rejoice and yet how much higher an attainment it is. The heart must be hard indeed that can witness sorrow or suffering with indifference, and none would wish to share in it. It is pitied but not envied. It is far different with the prosperous. Then another possesses what others covet, whether it be rank, riches, or beauty, or, what excites far more angry feeling, love and esteem, where these justifiable causes do not exist. In the first there is something comprehensible, but to

be loved and admired merely as an unadorned individual, is a crime against society. Mrs. Watson deeply resented all the fuss made about Mrs. Melcombe; Mrs. Somerset was rich, but she could not understand what people could see in that poor, dull, sick woman, or in those Delvilles, who were not a bit better than herself; and as for Louisa, she really could see nothing to admire in her pale baby face. She thought her Susan, with her bright red cheeks, worth a hundred of her, and she comforted herself by sitting down to her desk, and giving vent to her spleen in a letter to Lady Sophia, which, that our readers may understand her character, shall be communicated to them:—

“Dear Madam,

“Your departure from Langdale Park has left a blank which can never be filled up. Mr. Watson and I pass half our time in sighs and tears. It is shocking to think of that wicked Mrs. Melcombe having driven you away. Nobody would know us to be the same people, for you know that the Staunton families never would notice us. You will be surprised to hear that the Delvilles, not content with showing their contempt of you by patronising Mrs. Melcombe, have actually carried her off, and I am told, are fitting up Heath Farm for her. It is to be turned into a beau-

tiful house, and her atrocious son and your ungrateful daughter are to live with her, and will I have no doubt be made a great deal of. A nice encouragement to runaway girls. I only hope that my sweet Susan may not be injured by such near neighbourhood—think of there being only five miles between them! I am rejoiced to tell you that all their fine expectations about Louisa Delville are disappointed, and she is come back from London just as she went, to the great vexation of her father and mother. Mrs. Delville—so the postman told the gardener, who told the dairy-maid, who told my nursery-maid, who told Susan—is constantly in tears. Mr. Delville groans, and says, that nobody marries now except for money. Mrs. Somerset is quite in disgrace, and Louisa looks paler and thinner than ever. It serves them all right. Why should she be made a fuss about? Mrs. Melcombe keeps very much in her room, and makes a great deal more of her illness than she need, for I hear that all who see her, say that she is very cheerful. When people are really ill, as I know by seeing your ladyship, they cannot talk and laugh.

“I know you will be pleased to hear that we enjoy your excellent fruit and vegetables, which are far superior to Mrs. Somerset’s; and sometimes use the pony-carriage. Dear Susan,

poor thing, likes now and then to drive into the town. *She* has no fine friends, like certain people, to take her about. As far as I know, I have not much ill-conduct at the great house to relate, though I did hear that the housekeeper was seen on Sunday evening taking a walk with the baker. Of the Abbey I know nothing; for though I drove the pony there one day, and questioned the lodge-keeper very closely, I could get nothing out of him, but a long history of the good Lady Matilda did. I only hope that it is in the right way, and not after the Delville fashion, encouraging vice and immorality by pity and compassion. The groom told the grocer that he thought it would be a match between Mr. Somerset and Lady Matilda. It will be a fine disappointment to the Delvilles. Your ladyship will agree with me that it will be a good lesson for them. I hope your precious health is improving, and that Colonel Cumberland is more considerate. Mr. Watson and Susan send their respectful regards, and

“I remain,

“Your Ladyship’s devoted friend,

“MARIA WATSON.

“You may depend on my finding out all that goes on at Staunton, and letting you know.”

Such was the misrepresentation made by Mrs. Watson, and, strange as it may seem to the simple-minded, to whom all things are pure, honest, and of good report, it is no uncommon specimen of the way in which falsehood is propagated. The extraordinary stories that are invented, repeated, and believed, are incomprehensible to the upright in mind and the charitable in heart. The pleasure and satisfaction of lessening the merit of all who stand in the coveted place, seems one of the sweetest that can be enjoyed, and detraction the most refreshing of draughts. Those who have been praised and loved in the shade, lose all attraction in the sunshine. Silence and inuendo take the place of approbation, and when the merit is too established to receive increase by individual commendation, even the deserved tribute is withheld, and animadversion succeeds to previous regard. It has been truly said, that the dead alone receive just judgment. They can no longer lessen by superiority, or supplant by merit. When shut up in the darkness of the tomb, good rises to the memory, and the evil which malice invented being no longer fed by envy, rests in the grave—

“ Ah, sweetly they slumber, nor hope, love, or fear,
Peace, peace, is the watchword, the only one here.”

While Mrs. Watson pierced the intervening five miles with the eye of envy, malice, and uncharitableness, no such feelings influenced the peaceful occupants of Staunton Park or the rectory. It was herself, and not they, who caused a separation. Totally incapable of comprehending the higher views which influenced both families, and finding no response to her illiberality or vulgarity, she felt lowered in their society. They were ever ready to meet her on common grounds, but the contracted sphere and narrow limits to which her intellect and society were confined, afforded no subjects of conversation, so that unless they had condescended to take part in hers, with every wish to be so, it was scarcely possible to be friendly. Still all were willing to show her every attention in their power, and now that the family were wholly insulated, they were frequently invited both to Staunton and the rectory, and a carriage always sent for them. Far from having the effect of softening Mrs. Watson's feelings, it only irritated her; and after every meeting she filled her letters to Lady Sophia with remarks upon the extravagance and folly of the Delvilles, and the pride of Mrs. Somerset.

Among others we have selected the following :—

“Dear Madam,

“It is in vain for me to assure you that I am in any degree reconciled to your absence. It is true that the Staunton people pretend to be kind to me, but it is a very different kindness to that to which I have been accustomed. Mrs. Somerset is proud, imperious, and patronising, and what is the worst part of her, she sails under false colours. Lady Davenport is a comprehensible person and pretends to nothing, so that it is easy to keep her at a distance ; but the Somersets and Delvilles are regular make believes, and when I compare them to yourself with your meek and gentle spirit, I can scarcely imagine that they are of the same nature. I keep out of their way as much as I can, but I am obliged to be civil to them, as we live so near. Susan will I fear be injured by association with Miss Somerset and that pert Louisa Delville, but the poor girl would have nobody to speak to, so that I am obliged to tolerate it. Mrs. Melcombe is more cockered up than ever, and I really think that it is quite worth while to be ill to be made so much of. I rejoice to find that her son is fully punished for his conduct. I hear that he looks half-starved, and is very shabbily dressed, and that if it were not for Mrs. Somerset’s charity they would both be in prison. I hope your ladyship will never be tempted to forgive so very ungrateful a daughter.

You spared no pains to make her dutiful, and even so humble an individual as myself may hope that I neglected nothing in my power to make her what she ought to be,—but none are so deaf as those who will not hear.

“I am sorry to say that I saw the gardener give some peaches away last night, under some false pretence, no doubt. He was very impertinent when I ventured to reprove him. Dear Mr. Watson is sadly worn out with all his duties, and desires me to express his great regard for you.

“I hope you do not suffer too much from the cruelty of him who calls himself a kind husband, but who is quite blind to the perfections of so excellent a wife or to his own interest.

“I see some of the Staunton set coming, so I must receive them, much against my will, as you will believe, and

“I remain, dear Madam,

“Yours with sincere respect,

“MARIA WATSON.”

Immediately after closing her letter, Mrs. Watson might have been seen rushing up stairs to put on her best gown and cap, as she was never tidy excepting when dressed for company.

Heath Farm was rapidly progressing, and the joy of the children in the prospect of the holiday which was to be devoted to Mrs. Melcombe's

introduction to her new residence was unbounded. Nobody could have recognized the rough-looking farm-house in the elegant cottage into which the fairy wand of love had changed it. Mrs. Melcombe was enchanted, and though too weak to do more than admire it from the window, she did full justice to the affectionate interest which had been so freely manifested. The pleasure intended had been given and acknowledged, and this was all that any desired. Those who are too proud to be thankful, are unworthy of the kindness they have received ; for as David sings, "yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful." It is only the proud who withhold it. Far from being elevated in her own estimation by all the consideration she met with, Mrs. Melcombe's only feeling was one of overflowing gratitude to God, who after permitting her to be for years in storm and tempest, had at last provided her with a peaceful refuge for the few remaining years of her life. Her son's misconduct had added to the grief of her already broken heart. The measure of her cup of sorrow was full, and she was gradually, but surely, approaching to that haven

"Where the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest."

She could not have imagined that this ray of light upon her benighted path could have excited envy ; but believed that others would feel

as she would have done had another been cheered in a similar manner. Although Algernon was beginning to exhibit more steadiness of principle, and Edith daily proved that she had profited by the lessons of wisdom and experience she had received, Mr. Delville had advised Mrs. Melcombe to leave them for a longer time to themselves, in the hope that it might be the means of confirming them in their good resolutions. Both had undergone a change of feeling. It was impossible for a naturally generous mind like Algernon's not to feel deeply pained at all the sacrifices Edith was called upon to make. Her pale cheek and languid manner showed that she was suffering from the closeness of the atmosphere, and the confinement to which she was subjected by his necessary absence as a walking companion, and the impossibility of her going out alone. Mary was little older than herself, and though neither complained, and nothing would have induced the faithful creature to leave her young mistress, both saw the inroads of suffering marked in the appearance of the other. Mary secretly wrote to the old housekeeper at Langdale Park, who contrived to send her various little comforts which had belonged to her young mistress, and which her father had ordered to be destroyed, but which the good old woman had carefully preserved. She also added fruit,

flowers, and vegetables, which Edith did not find grow on her table in London, as she had fancied they had done in former days at her home. Mrs. Purvis, the housekeeper, thought that her former young lady had a much better right to them than Madam Watson, who seemed to consider the garden her own. She would gladly have sent many other things, but did not feel justified in doing so. It was a joyful sight to Edith, when her own little cargo of comforts was brought to her door. She and Mary passed nearly the whole day in arranging her room. An arm-chair, book-cases, work-box, writing materials, her books, and all the little bijouterie which had belonged to her own boudoir, had transformed her poor sitting-room into what appeared to her eyes a palace. Her wardrobe had also been sent, and it was with a beating heart that she dressed herself in one of her many handsome gowns, which Mary took as much pleasure in altering to look fashionable, smoothed her hair, and took out her work, the same which she had left unfinished, and waited for her husband. She had also a better dinner than usual, for Mrs. Purvis had sent some fowls from her husband's farm, which, with fruit and vegetables, made a very different meal to the one to which poverty was beginning to accustom them. Mary was not forgotten, and shared in the abundance. Since she had un-

derstood her duties, and her better feelings had been called into exercise, Edith had become much more interesting and companionable. She was not what would be called a beauty, but her expression was pleasing, and her countenance one which, lighted up as it now was with pleasurable sensations, was unusually attractive. Although she constantly retained a sense of the impropriety of her conduct, which Mrs. Somerset had not failed to place before her, her mind had acquired a composure which it had never known before, and there was a repose in her manner which greatly improved her. She daily felt more and more thankful to her heavenly Father, for having preserved her from the more fatal consequences which are almost always the fruit of a clandestine marriage. But for her husband's sake, she little regretted the loss of her fortune; riches had never given her happiness, and though at times during her long and solitary day she might feel her deprivations, the contrast between her present peaceful state of mind and her restless and miserable wanderings through her father's handsome park, was a pleasing one. On the day on which she had decked out her humble lodgings, Algernon returned in high spirits, and was quite willing to express as much pleasure in witnessing her efforts to please him, as Edith had experienced in her preparations. Each felt that most de-

lightful of all feelings, the consciousness of having wished to do right. How much more enjoyment there was at that moment in their hearts, in the renewed comforts that surrounded them, and in the mutual satisfaction each experienced in seeing the pleasure of the other, than in the cold and heartless profusion which surrounded Lady Davenport. It is true that they had much to struggle with, that their difficulties were still great in prospect, and, more than all, his mother's sufferings distressed Algernon, but they anticipated better days ; Edith fondly hoped to make up to her hereafter, by the affection of a daughter, for the loss of her son ; while Algernon, whose talents were daily bringing him into notice, hoped to assist in supporting her declining years. He was becoming a steady attendant at his chambers, and a few weeks after the happy evening we have described, he made so able a defence for one of his clients, that he attracted the attention of all the clever lawyers present. The hope that at last he might be permitted to take Edith to Staunton, the earnest desire to relieve his mother from the large demand upon her income which his present poverty occasioned, and the yet stronger wish of regaining her esteem, were powerful incentives. Mrs. Somerset still corresponded regularly with Edith ; and Mr. Delville neglected no opportunity, either by letters or

occasional visits when he was in London, of strengthening Algernon's good resolutions. His mother's prayers were already answered; and though it must be a work of time, every day seemed to give earnest of a future harvest. Her heart yearned towards her son, but her love was for his soul, so that she forgot herself in her desire for his good, and was willing to be guided by Mr. Delville, whose judgment was always tempered by mercy. The idea of remaining inexorable when repentance had been proved by after good conduct, was not one so truly Christian a mind as his could entertain. Those who do not forgive cannot hope to be forgiven, and "he who is content to go to heaven alone will not go there at all." It is true that confidence, in some cases, cannot with prudence be returned, for as the wise man writes, "Never trust thine enemy, for like as iron rusteth, so is his wickedness: though he humble himself, and go crouching, yet take good heed and beware of him, and thou shalt be unto him' as if thou hadst wiped a looking-glass; and thou shalt know that his rust hath not been altogether wiped away." "Set him not by thee, lest when he hath overthrown thee he stand up in thy place; neither let him sit at thy right hand, lest he seek to take thy seat, and thou at the last remember my words and be pricked therewith."

It is weakness to put ourselves into the power of one who has been proved unworthy of trust, either from ignorance or wickedness ; but former injuries should not be allowed a place in our memory, excepting for self-preservation. Those who have committed them are alone to be pitied ; they can do us no harm without God's permission, but our anger can seriously injure ourselves. It is perhaps one of our hardest lessons, but the grace of God is all-sufficient ; and he who lets the sun go down upon his wrath, is not a true Christian. The right hand of Christian fellowship may always be held out, and how dwelleth the love of God in him who refuses to give it ? And yet how many who would not be seen at "music and dancing for the world," are angry at the prodigal's being again received into his Father's house, and turn their faces from him,—who live at enmity with a brother or sister, and call themselves followers of our Saviour. There cannot be a greater stumbling-block to the worldly-minded, many of whom, without any profession of religion, dwell together in love. It may truly be said that while "they strain at a gnat, they swallow a camel," and forget what is so forcibly written by St. John ; "He that saith he is in light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him ;

but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

Lady Matilda Mertoun made frequent visits to Staunton Rectory, although her time was much occupied by attendance on her parents. Lord Rockingham had for a considerable time been a great invalid, but the sweet and cheerful spirit of his daughter was ever at his side. The merely honourable upright man of the world had become a practical Christian. Unable to attend his public duties, he devoted all his time and thoughts to the improvement of his estate, in the true sense of the word; not by adding field to field, and house to house, for his own personal aggrandizement, but by bettering the condition of his tenantry in mind and body, and in giving them every spiritual advantage. The livings in his gift were not thrown away merely to provide for idleness and stupidity, or because they were the only patronage in his own power when asked for assistance. He was not too proud to ask a favour for another when not able to confer it himself; his desire was to do good, not to encrease his own consequence. In providing for a really faithful minister, he provided for the souls of all in his parish. While his living was his maintenance, his teaching was the living water, of which those who

drink will never thirst again. The tithes of bodily food would only be changed into that which is spiritual, and thus it would be a mutual gain. Those who took the livings were expected at the same time to take all their responsibilities.

Matilda was the friend of all her father's dependants, and in the daily exercise of Christian duty, and the happiness of ministering to the comfort and amusement of her parents, she never knew a sad hour. Even her mother, though incapable of understanding her motives, was too happy in the effect to quarrel with them. The cold and heartless conduct of her favourite daughter had completely estranged her from her, and she turned with childlike pleasure to the never-varying devotion of Matilda. Her brother was equally under her influence ; for consistency invariably gains respect, even when a difference of opinion may exist. It is never our Saviour's religion which disgusts, but the inconsistency of its professors. "They say and do not." All who witness it in its true character cannot fail to wonder and admire, if they do not love. Our own evil nature grafted on this beautiful stem is what disfigures the flower. In itself it is first "pure," then "lovely," and "of good report ;" and he only is happy who sits under its shadow and feeds on its fruit. Such was Matilda. Hers

was charity in its true sense,—love that made itself felt, and a faith showing itself in love to God and man. Even the most malicious owned her power ; and Mrs. Watson could never hear or see any thing to animadvert upon, but her ridiculous condescension in choosing to be so intimate with those Delvilles, in whom she could see nothing to love or admire, and who set themselves up to seem more than their neighbours, merely to make themselves noticed. It was an offence she could never forgive ; though when Lord Rockingham's carriage occasionally drove up to her own door she found no fault, still less when a pine, or melon, or grapes found their way to Langdale rectory. Then Matilda was charming ; and after such visits she generally set off for Staunton to announce the great kindness and attention she received from the Abbey, and was extremely mortified to find that, instead of exciting envy, all were pleased that she had not been forgotten. Heath Farm was a sad heartburning to her, particularly when, instead of the poor place she thought Mrs. Melcombe deserved, she saw it the picture of comfort and of simple elegance. She told Mr. Watson that she was quite sure that she could not pay for it, and wondered how it was possible she could have made it so pretty. She questioned all her acquaintance as to her means of maintaining herself, and doubted whether she

did ever pay any body. To her great surprise and considerable disappointment, Mrs. Melcombe continued to live on in respectability and comfort, and was daily more and more appreciated by all about her.

While Mrs. Watson was thus constantly busy about her neighbours' affairs, her own did not prosper. Susan, in her various drives to the neighbouring town, had made some most undesirable acquaintances. Upon one or two occasions she had gained permission to stay on a visit of a few days with an old maiden aunt, who had established herself at Winton to be near her relations at Langdale. When there, she secretly attended the theatre, where she met one of the actors, a mere strolling player, and to the inexpressible horror of her parents, disappeared with him. At Langdale she was never seen or heard of more. Mrs. Watson's real distress excited the commiseration of all at Staunton. None reproached or neglected her, but by every act of kindness heaped coals of fire on her head. With others it was very different; for her want of charity, her spiritual pride and self-sufficiency, had made her so many enemies, that they rejoiced in her misery. She was treated with contempt by some, and with reproaches by others. The parish church was deserted, and a dissenting chapel erected. The absence of the family from Langdale Park

left the village without protection, and it soon became a scene of disorder. Mrs. Watson could no longer teach with advantage in the village school, when her own children disgraced her by their manners and ill-conduct. She had sacrificed her duties to the pleasure of passing her time with Lady Sophia, who, like all selfish people, was perfectly happy without her. The absence of all other amusement, and no real congeniality of feeling, had made her a necessary appendage, a sort of daily food, which, though insipid and mawkish, had become a part of her daily routine. Since she had left Langdale Park, the increased consequence of her present position, her new equipages, and the determination of Colonel Cumberland to entertain his neighbours and fill his house, had forced her into exertion. Her nervous ailments had taken flight, and she was a new creature. Edith's presence no longer reminded her of her age, so that since she had discarded her *peignoir* and interesting invalid cap, she might have passed very well for ten years younger than she really was. Mrs. Watson was wholly forgotten, her letters unanswered and often unread; for the small gossip which had amused her ennui at Langdale, appeared very contemptible in the larger sphere of action to her tongue and ears which a constant succession of visitors supplied. This is no uncommon case. Circum-

stances throw persons altogether uncongenial into each other's society, with no bond of union but the absence of other subjects or objects of interest. An intimacy of necessity is formed, which becomes irksome when its causes cease to exist. The attempt to maintain it is vain; for when the interests, friends, and connexions of each are unknown to the other, there remains little for conversation, unless literature or public matters have been sufficiently studied to become its subject. Coolness and indifference arise unconsciously, and the accusation of fickleness is the consequence. There are three sorts of intimacies, which spring from necessity, propinquity, or choice: the last can alone become a friendship; the others will necessarily cease with the circumstances which occasioned them, or, if continued, can only be a well or ill-acted part, equally uninteresting to both parties, as wanting warmth or flow. Prudence, and the habit of taking society as an accident, and not as essential to existence, tend in a certain degree towards making it a matter of less importance. It is the desire of passing idle time which so often exposes to these unnatural intimacies. Acquaintance it is impossible for those who live in the full tide of life to control; even intimacies cannot always be avoided; but friendship must have higher grounds to stand upon, and before we dash

into it a general view of all around should be taken. It has been well said by Pascal, "que tout le malheur des hommes vient de ne savoir pas se tenir en repos dans une chambre."

In judging of character, personal liking must be separated from the scale, until we have ascertained how it stands in all its other relations; for those who are unfaithful in one will be unfaithful in all. Those whom we respect are not always the most loveable. "Those persons who creep into the hearts of most people, who are chosen as the companions of their softer hours, and their reliefs from care and anxiety, are never persons of shining qualities or strong virtues. It is rather the soft green of the soul on which we rest our eyes, that are fatigued with beholding glaring objects." In strong and firm characters "we have much to admire, much to reverence, and perhaps something to fear: we respect its possessor, but at a distance. With the being of a softer and tenderer nature we become more familiar, and he leads us where he pleases. Those virtues which cause admiration and are of the sublimer kind produce terror rather than love; such as fortitude, justice, wisdom, and the like. No man is amiable by the force of such qualities alone. Those which engage the heart, which impress with a sense of loveliness, are the softer virtues; easiness of

temper, compassion, kindness, and liberality ; but these are in reality of much less immediate and momentous concern to society, and of less dignity. It is for this very reason that they are more amiable. The greater virtues turn principally on dangers, punishments, and troubles, and are exercised rather in preventing the worst mischiefs than in dispensing favours, and are therefore not lovely, though highly venerable. The subordinate turn on reliefs, gratifications, and indulgences, and are therefore more lovely, though inferior in dignity¹." Their very attraction makes them the more dangerous ; but when tried in the time of danger or difficulty, the strong becomes a support and comfort, while amiable weakness, by its incompetency in the season of action, becomes contemptible. It may pass in sunshine, but emits no light in the hour of darkness. Indeed none are so mischievous as what are called good-natured, well-meaning people : their good-nature is folly, and their well-meaning an absence of all discrimination or tact.

In losing Lady Sophia, Mrs. Watson lost all. In herself she had nothing. She was an abstract being, a kind of excrescence upon a more important foundation. She had been made by the attentions of her patroness. She had no

¹ Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

friends to fall back upon, and in her season of sorrow all those whom she had cast aside, for the sake of being tolerated at Langdale Park, rejoiced in her disgrace, and in the disappointment of her pride. Although it was impossible for her not to feel grateful for the delicacy, kindness, and consideration of all at Staunton, her conscience made her feel humbled in the society of minds and manners so different to her own, though every endeavour was used to make her at ease. It was, therefore, a great comfort to her when a distant relation, a Liverpool merchant, offered her husband the curacy of a chapel in that town, the emolument of which would be equal to the living of Langdale. The family took their departure without a tear of regret on either side; and Mr. Herbert, a neighbour of Colonel Cumberland's in Devonshire, being anxious for a living for his son, it was presented to him, to hold till Edward Cumberland was of an age to take it.

Alfred Herbert was in earnest in his profession. Uninfluenced by mercenary motives, he had entered into holy orders with the fullest sense of the responsibility entailed upon him. He had not taken these sacred vows upon him merely as a provision in a worldly sense, nor had he been selected by his parents because he was the plainest or the least talented of their sons. Far from it, his appearance and

manners would have graced an earthly court, as much as they adorned the ministrations devoted to a higher sphere. His noble disposition, independence of mind, and courageous temperament, would have made him as good a soldier of war as it fitted him to be the champion of the Great Captain of his salvation, but he neither affected the courtier nor the soldier. He was the clergyman and the Christian gentleman. His was not the miscalled independence which merely follows inclination, with no regard to decency, order, or the claims of society, nor that which denies it to all others, retaining it for himself alone, but the determination to do what is right at all cost. At the time when he accepted the living of Langdale, he was about six-and-twenty, with a strikingly intelligent and pleasing countenance, one which bespoke love and kindness without weakness, firmness without severity, intellect and talent under the influence of sound principle and discipline. Unlike Algernon, there was no absence of moral courage. The love of ease or peace could never make him compromise principle. The weak would call him obstinate, because nothing could force him to give up a just cause ; the timid would call him stern, because he boldly denounced sin ; the proud would call him proud, because, though always courteous and sympathizing, he was not familiar, respect-

ing his office and himself. But as he was better known, and his character developed itself, the steadiness of principle, the pleasant and continued calm which followed upon his determined adhesion to the path of uprightness, and the absence of contention, which was prevented by his consistent kindness, erected a lasting respect and esteem, followed by a love which neither lessened, nor was blighted. Its foundation was truth, and its ramparts simplicity, faith, humility, and prayer. He had none of the morbid feeling of the present day, which in compassion for the sinner, forgets the heinousness of sin. There was no absence of the first, but the character of crime cannot be changed; and when expediency takes the place of integrity all discipline is at an end,—that discipline so beautifully described by the wise man, “For at first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread on him, and torment him with her discipline until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him, and shew him her secrets. But if he go wrong she will forsake him, and give him over to his own ruin¹.” It was with deep concern that he found the village of Langdale in so neglected a condition. The church, in

¹ Eccles. iv. 17—19.

itself a handsome edifice, had been allowed to fall into decay, and would require to be almost rebuilt. Its internal appearance at once announced the indifference of his predecessor to "doing all things decently and in order." The altar cover was worn out and hung in tatters, scarcely concealing the unseemly legs of a common deal table. The font no longer existed, and a bason supplied its place. The surplices bore witness to the same neglect ; the hassocks and cushions were moth-eaten. The school had been for some time wholly neglected ; and the poor would have been equally uncared for, but for the dissenting minister, who was a really good and respectable man. Mr. Watson had pleaded ill-health, and passed most of his time in smoking, gardening, or hunting after his tithes. Mrs. Watson thought Lady Sophia's nerves of far more consequence than the souls of the whole village. Susan could not teach what she did not know, and what she knew was better untaught ; so that altogether, little remained but weeds, or some uncultivated flowers, running to seed for want of nurture. In a few months nobody would have recognized it as the same village. The church was repaired ; the unsightly pews, so deservedly termed by an abler pen than this "cattle pens," were removed, and the system of locking them, once so common in country churches, wholly prevented.

The school was remodelled, and Colonel Cumberland and Mr. Herbert, Alfred's father, willingly seconded him in his good work by an ample supply of the means. The effect was soon visible ; the outworks having been strengthened and repaired, the inward and spiritual part was not neglected. By constant intercourse with his people during the week, and his earnest and deeply spiritual addresses on the Sunday, the congregation rapidly returned, and in a very short time the dissenting chapel was closed, and the minister, towards whom, as a sincere and upright man, Alfred Herbert had always shown kindness and attention, had been gradually brought back into the Established Church, and was installed as schoolmaster. It had been necessity more than conviction which had led him to desert her standard, and partly the idea of raising himself in the scale of society, which often leads to dissent among the lower orders. In Mr. Herbert's ministry he had soon seen the error of his way, and setting aside pride and prejudice, the two great promoters of schism, he became a sound churchman and a most useful assistant to the rector in his parish. It was a pleasant change for Staunton ; and in the mutual intercourse enjoyed, Alfred was thankful to profit by the experience and superior knowledge of Mr. Delville. He was not too

proud to bow to the opinion of one so much further advanced in the Christian walk than himself, more especially as it was founded upon the received writings of the wisest and the best;—not the fanciful interpretation of self-sufficiency and want of discipline, which is always dangerous, and generally leads astray. Years had established in Mr. Delville what was only a promise in Alfred.

As “morning dew is a pawn of evening fatness,” so is early goodness an earnest of future power. Far happier are they who offer their first freshness to God, than those who only bring their worn-out spirits and disappointed hopes as a fit offering to the Author and Giver of all good. Though they may, and we have every reason to believe will, be accepted at the eleventh hour, it is dangerous to trust to this expectation. It is far safer to begin with the day which is ours, than to wait for an evening which may never come. The pleasures of sin are but for a moment, and leave a sharp sting in their train; but the happiness that arises from love to God in Christ, is one that nothing can disturb:—

“ True happiness is not the growth of earth,
The search is useless if you seek it there :
'Tis an exotic of celestial birth,
And only blossoms in celestial air.”

It is not religion that saddens, but the con-

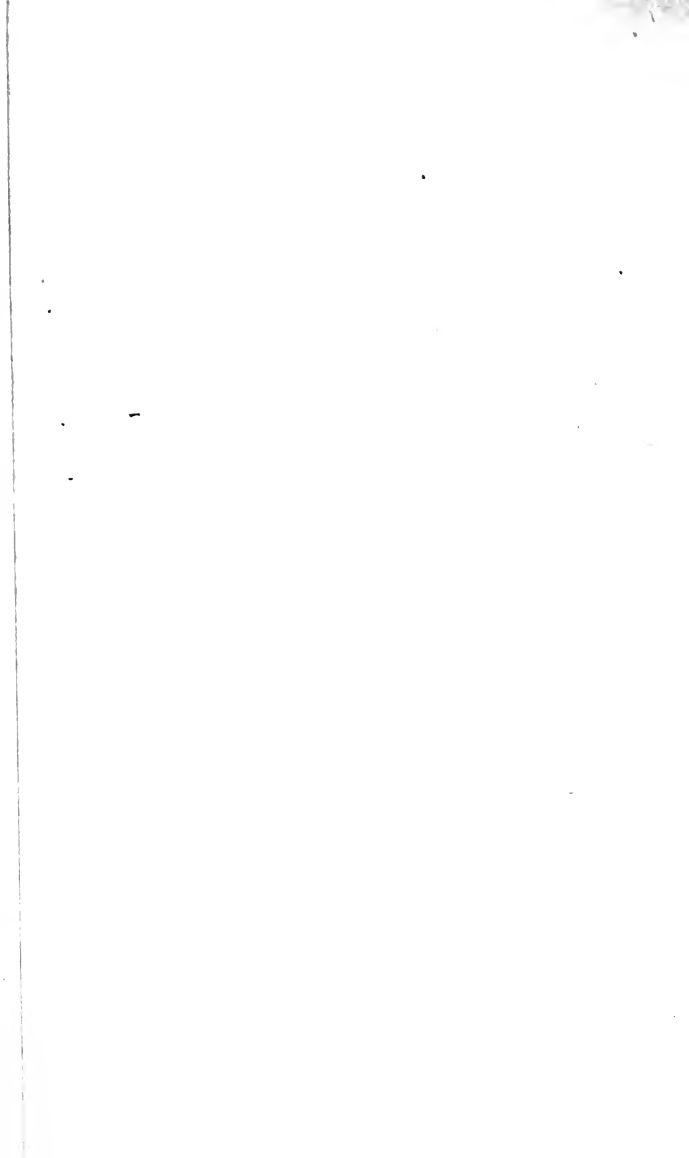
temptation of sin. The really holy man has no wish to travel heavenward alone,—his heart yearns after the souls of others. He longs to share his peace and joy with them; to save them from the precipice towards which they are blindly hastening. It is a withering and awful spectacle to see them bent upon self-destruction, and one that brought tears from our Saviour's eyes. Many might say with Him, "If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes."

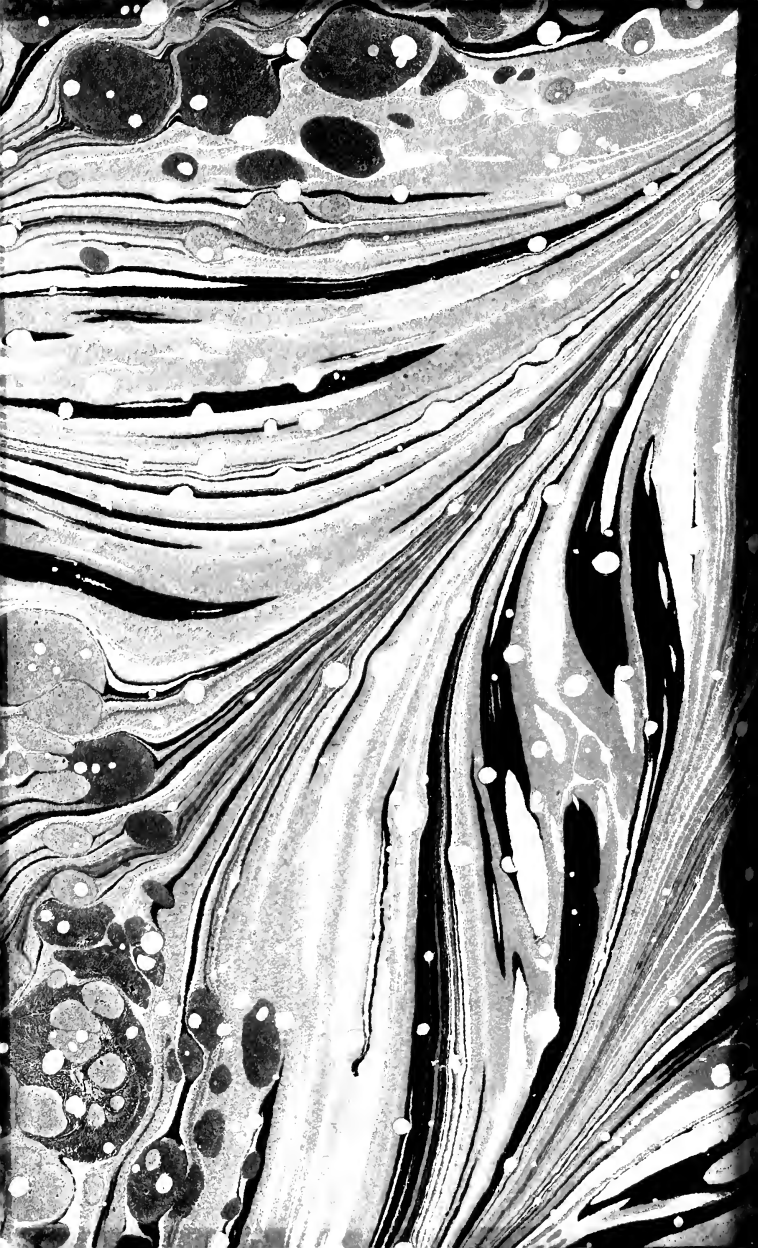
Note.—Bossuet has so beautifully expressed the rapidity of life, that I cannot refrain from imparting to my readers what I have derived so much pleasure from myself.

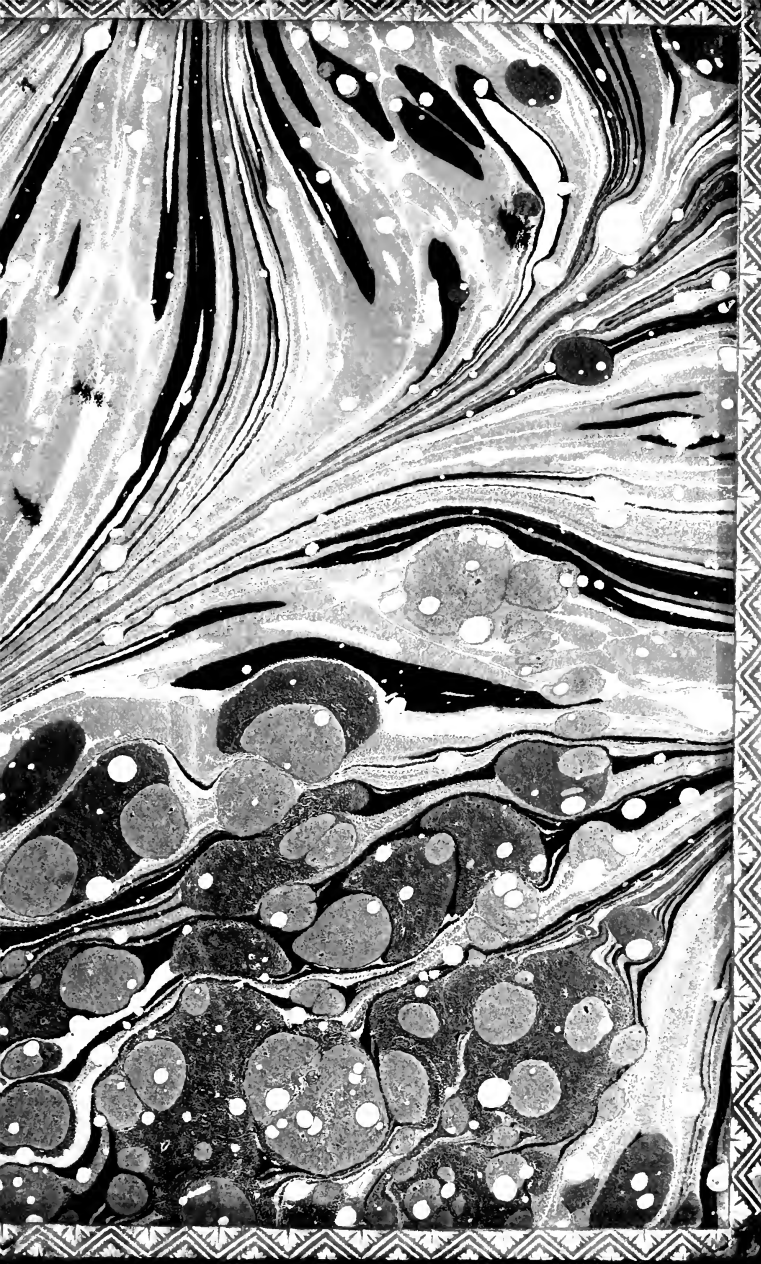
"La vie humaine est semblable à un chemin dont l'issue est un précipice affreux; on nous avertit dès le premier pas, mais la loi est prononcée, il faut avancer toujours. Je voudrais retourner sur mes pas: '*Marche, Marche.*' Un poids invincible, une force invincible nous entraîne; il faut sans cesse avancer vers le précipice. Mille traverses, mille peines nous fatiguent et nous inquiètent dans la route; encore si je pouvois éviter ce précipice affreux. Non, non, il faut marcher, il faut courir, telle est la rapidité des années. On se console pourtant, parce que de temps en temps on rencontre des objets qui nous divertissent, des eaux courantes, des fleurs qui passent. On voudrait arrêter. '*Marche, Marche.*' Et cependant on voit tomber derrière soi tout ce que l'on avoit passé,—fracas effroyable, inévitable ruine. On se console parce qu'on emporte quelques fleurs cueillies en passant, qu'on voit se faner entre ses mains du matin au soir, quelque fruits qu'on perd en les goûtant. *Enchantement* toujours entraîné, tu approches du gouffre. Déjà tout commence

à s'effacer ; les jardins moins fleuris—les fleurs moins brillantes, leurs couleurs moins vives, les prairies moins riantes, les eaux moins claires,—tout se ternit, tout s'efface, l'ombre de la mort se présente. On commence à sentir l'approche du gouffre fatal. Mais il faut aller sur le bord encore un pas. Déjà l'horreur trouble les sens, la tête tourne, les yeux s'égarent : *il faut marcher*. On voudroit retourner en arrière : *plus de moyen* ; tout est tombé, tout est évanoui, tout est échappé. Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire que ce chemin c'est la vie ; que ce gouffre *c'est la mort*."—BOSSUET.

END OF VOL. I.







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